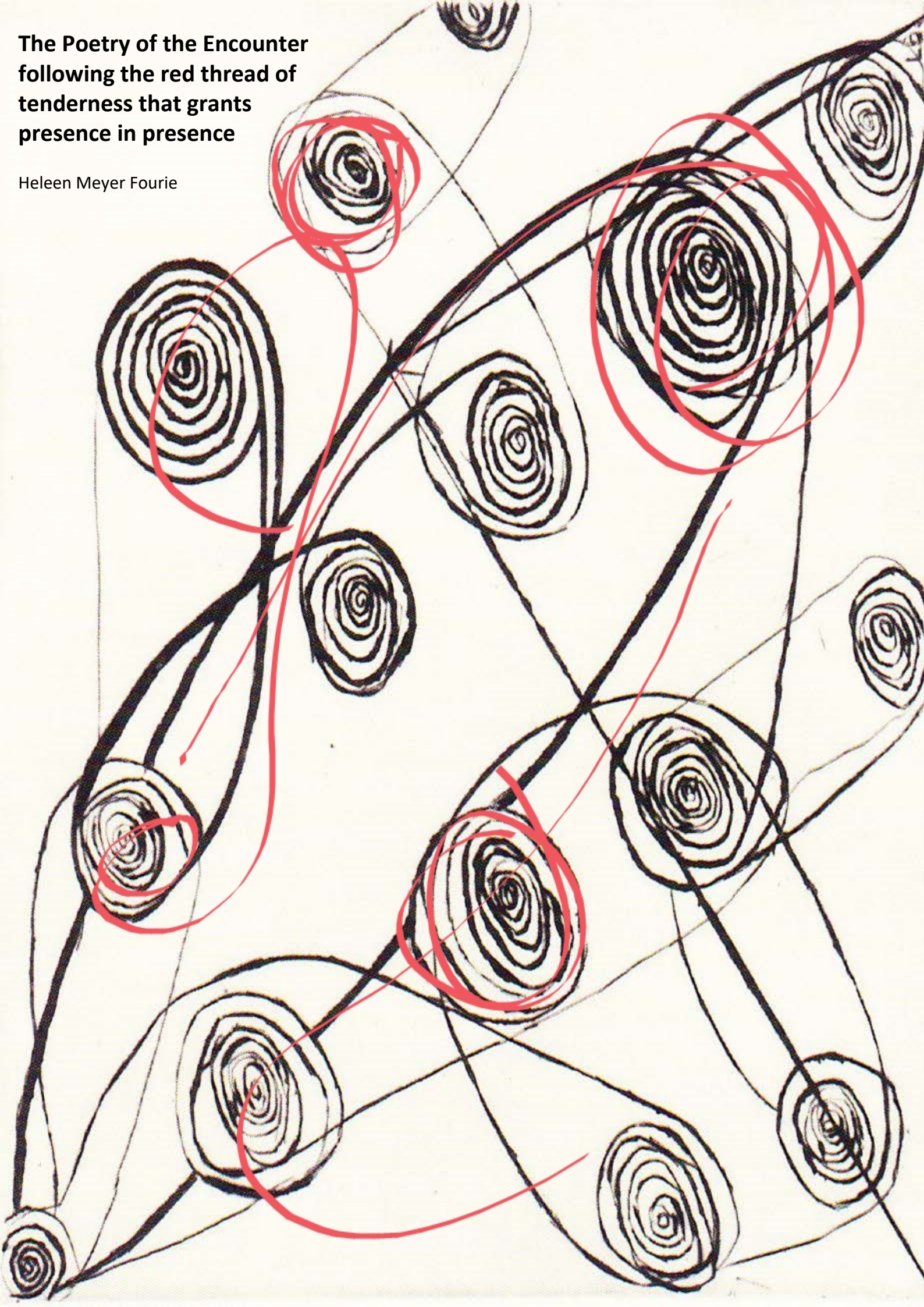


**The Poetry of the Encounter
following the red thread of
tenderness that grants
presence in presence**

Heleen Meyer Fourie





Over the years I have come to appreciate Rolando's saying that Biodanza can never be done alone. Thank you to each Biodanzero who has danced with me. Without each one of you this would not have happened.

Special appreciation for their kindness, generosity and support goes to my teachers - Carolina, Catherine and Kate and my friends - Claudio, Ximena, Alison, Karen, Michael, Linda, Myrna, Joyanne, Monica, Alan, Julia, Luba, Prue, Marguerite - this is as much yours as mine.

This is also for my family who am sure that I am a little different but love me for it Wilna, Jaco, Willem, Anne-Lize and crew. Thank you to you for the endless hours of support and care.

Some people need a second mention Anne-Lize, Michael and Wilna your time helped me over the line.



My manifesto – the why:

The Poetry of the Encounter is a healthy way to generate a lived experience of tenderness where the thread of affectivity leads us through an encounter to a moment where we can connect with presence and grants presence to another. Rolando refers to this as: "Tenderness: the presence that grant presence"

"Only if our movement restores their sense of bonding will we succeed in being reborn from the obscene chaos of our times. We thus participate in a different vision, we seek access to a new way of living, awakening our dormant sensitivity"

The world has evolved, grown, changed, lived since Rolando Toro Araneda wrote and said this. In this dissertation I touch on the major changes since the birth of Biodanza, what makes this statement timeless and why this is and will always be relevant - perhaps even more so now and in the future.

I am a story person and a journalist at heart and this is a Biocentric "story-journey" through ideas and concepts calling on my strongest character strengths of appreciation of beauty, gratitude and bravery.

I hope to celebrate our natural needs and the intrinsic life giving values Rolando Toro saw as our objectives in life "a feeling of intimacy, of transcendence, of joyful connection and stimulating happiness." To highlight why there is even now a greater need of the objective to activate groups through dance and communication to induce vivencia – a lived experience nearly a century later.

To me our greatest achievement is to be able to look ourselves and those we encounter in our every day, in the eye with presence. To spark the joy of recognition – we are both here – a sense of wonder and a moment of tenderness. This vivencia is what keeps us alive to say goodbye as we move towards death – not the buildings we build, the flights to the moon or even the most beautiful paintings. This experience of presence is what we long for every morning we return to this world.

Synopsis:

This dissertation hopes to follow *the little red thread of fate*¹ into the concept of “encounter with tenderness” in Biodanza. The aim is to unravel this statement by Rolando Toro de Aranceda during an interview in 2002: “*I thought of Biodanza as the poetry of the human encounter; as a different way of relating in an extremely solitary world in which people are deprived of love and what we need most in life is tenderness*”

I use the metaphor of the *little red thread of fate* deliberately. It is an Eastern Myth in which the Gods tie the ankles together of those who are destined to meet with a red thread. Rolando’s statement touches on a myriad of things and a *little red thread* determined how the dissertation unfolded.

I departed on journey by referencing the “zeitgeist” in which Biodanza was incubated and exploring the bio-psycho-social experience human organisms has within the context of encounters. I looked at how this is supported by scientific research on the fact that encounters are essential for a healthy nervous system.

Enunciations in Biodanza and their role in creating presence and enabling transformative encounters lead me to observations on the subtext of what Rolando Toro said when he used the metaphor of the poem to describe an encounter. I follow with an exploration of the resonance between the aim of well-being in Positive Psychology and the growth experienced through encounters in Biodanza. A question arose: “Could we capture, chart and reference through the values in action of Biodanzers through Positive Psychology tools and relate this back to a Biocentric worldview? As a result I include a small research study.

The red thread of fate continues through the circle of poetry and narrated experiences. I will draw on my poetry and words and stories shared by some of my fellow Biodanzeros here in Australia.

¹ There is an old Chinese proverb that says “an invisible thread connects those who are destined to meet regardless of time place and circumstance. This thread may stretch or tangle, but it will never break.” My experience in writing this dissertation reflected this synergy of connection. Whenever I was lost my way the thread would continue guiding me.

At the end of the dissertation I tie all the little red strings into a bow that brings us back to the understanding of the strength of Rolando's insights. The *poetry of the encounter where tenderness grants presence through presence* is the missing link. If we embrace this we could grow in our experience of the deepest layer of the human unconscious. A layer Rolando called the "numinous unconscious". The numinous unconscious defined by Rolando "*generates love, poetry, perception of the marvellous and the courage to live*" (Rolando Toro, 2000, p1)

ANNI ALBERS – Red Meander



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1. Introduction

1.1 A historical perspective

We cannot avoid a relationship with ourselves, others and the world around us every moment of every day while we are alive. Our quality of life is defined by how we encounter daily life.

Rolando Toro Araneda believed that through Biodanza, a system that celebrates the instincts and emotions, and enables a psycho-biological regeneration, we will develop a way of relating to ourselves and others through *the poetry of the encounter with tenderness: the quality of presence that grants presence* (Araneda, quoted in WB 1, BSA 11, p2) and that this will enable each of us and the people we come into contact with to flourish.

The intrinsic value of the relationship and the individual within society was enshrined in international law less than a hundred years ago. Rolando started his journey in the 1950s and saw this in the world: *“We are too isolated, in the middle of a collective chaos. In the act of not looking at, not listening to and not touching the other, we subtly strip them of their identity.”* It was a time when the indelible value of the Individual, and the group within the context of the state did not exist in parts of the world. The individual was seen as an extension of the state and had no inherent value. As a result groups of individuals could be dealt with as the state saw fit. It was for example within the right of the state to legislate the extermination of Jews, Gypsies and others they saw as unfit.

The Nuremberg Trials defined the execution of these laws during WW2 as crimes against humanity and genocide and made concrete the value of the individual as a human being belonging to an ethnic or chosen group separate from the state.

These concepts were fathered by two Jewish Polish legal minds who were born at opposite ends of the same street in the small multicultural city of Zólkiew and studied law under the same professor in the city of Lemberg. “Lauterpacht and Lemkin were two young men in Lemberg. Their ideas have had global resonance. “... These concepts ... developed side by side, a relationship that connects the individual and the group.” (Sands, 2018, p378)

From a Biocentric perspective it could be speculated whether these concepts were part of the collective unconscious, or the zeitgeist, that grew from the atrocities of the two World Wars.

1.2 A hunger for meaning

Rolando was driven by a hunger for meaning fuelled by WW2 and the inhumane rule of Pinochet.² The Bushmen of the Kalahari speak of two hungers. The first is a hunger for food, the second an insatiable hunger for meaning. This hunger for meaning is captured in their art and their dance.

Rolando was ever aware of these two hungers playing itself out in all of us: a need for identity, the consciousness integrated with the biological, and a need to be part of the group and that which is bigger than the group, the collective social consciousness. In the theoretical model he created he placed the consciousness of the identity of the self on one end of the horizontal axis and the consciousness of the cosmological self on other end (Araneda, WB 1, BSA 2, p23). As he said "I arrived over time, to the conviction that the states of identity and regression are absolutely complementary and cover the totality of the human experience".

1.3 Biocentric growth

As we oscillate along this axis during our Biodanza journey we encounter experiences along the five lines of vivencia, vitality, sexuality, creativity, affectivity and transcendence using a system built on dance, music and caress. The aim is to reclaim the generic potential of the instincts and the biocentric conviction is that this will lead to an integration, which will manifest in tenderness and ethical integrity.

² The legacy of these two concepts is entrenched in international law. Ironically Senator Augusto Pinochet, former President of Chile "was not entitled to claim immunity from the jurisdiction of the English courts because the acts of torture for which he was said to be responsible were a crime against humanity". This ruling in 1998 was the first ever of its kind ever handed down by national law. (Sands, 2018, p379)

Tenderness that grants tenderness
Nourish vital impetus
Nourish the fire of identity
Welcome the peace of transcendence
Embrace the self in the dance within
Embrace the other in the dance within
Starting within the circle
An affective vivencia of acceptance
Welcoming and celebrating a seamless humanity
The tone is set for transformation with care
To flourish

(Heleen Meyer Fourie)

Affectivity is the core of Biodanza. It holds within itself a decision to make contact - *to encounter* - the self and the other with love and care.

To quote Michael Delamere a Sydney Biodanzero:

I loved the varied forms of encounter. A simple experience such as eutony with the fingertip could be ecstatic. I grew to enjoy walks. Gazes, moving from encounter to encounter, circles, hugs, caresses of the hand and hair, angel exercises, giving and receiving dance with another, exercises of undifferentiated eros, I valued them all.³

This contact is not done with the intention to heal, but to facilitate change that will unleash within us a natural healing by awakening the limbic-hypothalamic centre of the brain. To touch with eyes, with hands, with feet, limbs and souls with no higher purpose than awakening the genetic potential of life facilitating the journey from original consciousness to personal consciousness - an identity of love and a sense of joy and wonder. Rolando said that: "the perfect human encounter is a sacred ceremony of expansion of consciousness."

³ Michael Delamere, one of the very first people who came to participate in a class in Sydney, contributed to this work by writing an essay on his journey with encounters over the years. I will quote segments from this throughout.

1.4 The presence of Biodanza

My proposal is that with the growth of virtual experiences and lives lived through screens and keyboards this “oscillating continuum” has taken on a new dimension. In today’s world we often oscillate between the virtual and the experience, losing the connection of the encounter. It has been found that the information young people are exposed to and retain has increased by 30% since 1995, whereas their lived experience that is interacting with others on a one to one basis, going out for a walk in nature, playing sport, has remained the same or declined. (Dean & Malcolm, 15 April 2018)

I see the presence of Biodanza in the world as a different way of being that can awaken the potential humans have for a corporal and visceral experience of tenderness or affection within community. Enabling a community that reaches beyond technology and ideologies of separation back to individual encounters of presence in which we rediscover and harvest the wonder and strength that is inherent in positive proto-vivencias experienced in the womb and as a young child. Experiences defined by Rolando as follows: *“The ability to be active and rest, make contact with our first sensations of pleasure, experience our well-being, discomfort and curiosity, to feel held and be safe, to be in harmony with the plenitude in our larger environment.”* (Araneda, quoted in WB 1, BSA 11, p 25). This enables us to flourish as a group, but also to define and flourish within our identity.

The encounter within community or tribe is vivencial and has been shown to be affected by a collective unconscious. Affect theorists claim that within a group of people there is an “affect”, an experienced “consciousness”, which travels through the group before emotions manifest and individuals can refer to an experience.⁴ It is “in the field” is as process oriented psychologists would say. (Then and Now (9 Feb 2019); Lewis, M (2018)) It is this affect that leaders and instigators tap into and is the larger manifestation of the presence Rolando talked about.

⁴ For example the collective experience felt by a crowd at a football match, or a music festival or the bliss of a weekend of Biodanza.

Rolanda said that this *experience of being is felt* within our life force, living within our tissues, our cells and our RNA. He described this internal experience of a self-organisational life force as the Vital Unconscious. This force creates a sense of self-conservation in our physiology and psyche, but it is also the force through which we see the other as ourselves and it is this encounter and recognition that leads us out of risk and back to a universal bond.

We are all one

The force that drives us

Is the same one that ignites the sun

That animates the seas

And that makes the cherry trees flower

The force that moves us

Is the same one that agitates the seeds

With its immemorial message of life

The dance generates identity

Under the same laws that connect

The flower and the breeze

Under the sunflower of harmony

We are all one

Rolando Toro Araneda

The fact that we are not alone and that our strength lies in the harmony of community is what we re-discover in Biodanza. Fellow Biodanzeros often comment that: "This is what sets Biodanza apart, this sense of community." A sense of community is created through *the encounter*.

2. The building blocks – a developmental framework

2.1 A Conscious Choice

Genetically we are driven to affectivity. In Biodanza we work from having made a conscious choice to explore, express and develop the potential of the seven kinds of love, from Eros through to Agape.⁵ This ability to love ourselves, others and the world is an integral part of the genetic potential of the line of affectivity. The premise we work from has been scientifically proven and has now become common knowledge: - “Human beings cannot thrive without affectivity, nor the impetus to care and express care towards themselves and others.”

In his thinking on the creation of Biodanza Rolando wrote that: “only if our movements restore their sense of bonding, will we succeed in being reborn from the obscene chaos of our times “. (Araneda, WB 1, BSA 2, p9) Encounters in Biodanza defined by tenderness and presence are the building blocks of these bonds and are the opposing force to social-entropy. .

To choose to care and love does not imply living in a world of utopian happiness as promised by the flower children in the 1960s and the constant happiness paradigm sold in self-help literature. Rolando quotes Ortega Y Gasset (Affectivity Workbook, BSA 2) who proclaimed that affectivity includes every passion of the soul especially love and affection, but also dislike. Biodanza processes can lead one to experience the whole spectrum of emotions, and can more importantly foster the ability to integrate these through the experience of vivencia.

Wilhelm Dilthy (1833 – 1911) pointed out the difference between the two meanings of experience in German. An experience could be seen as “erfahrung” meaning something that happens to you, as opposed to “erlebnis” meaning living in the moment. This informed Rolando’s concept of “vivencia”. In the writing of Dilthy and the work of Rolando a vivencia is seen as meaning a moment that felt as if *it existed in the present, left the past behind and did not contemplate the future.* (“Wilhelm Dilthy”, Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, 2019) Changes⁶ and care spill over from the Biodanza session into the vivencia of life, metaphorically weaving a red thread of love. Our tools of encounter are embraces, contact through the eyes,

⁵ The ancients Greeks defined seven kinds of love. These include eros, sexual love, philia, the love between friends, Agape, universal love amongst others. To read more: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/hidden-and-seeking/201606/these-are-the-7-types-love>

⁶ The bio-psychic changes that take place during vivencia enables an integration of the lines of genetic potential and will lead to changes that will enable a growth experience. To facilitate this Biodanza focus on the vivencias of joy, peace, tenderness and transcendence to reintegrate through proto vivencias. (Araneda, Vivencia WB, BSA2)

caresses, holding hands, sharing a melody and, on an electromagnetic level, sharing the energy field created by the heart. All of this is done not as part of a ritualistic approach, but from a point of reciprocity and fusion.

This gives permission to care and receive in sincerity. It strengthens morphogenetic⁷ links we observe in many other ethological patterns in the world around us. On a cellular level the mitochondria houses our potential energy, we are held together by a matrix woven by fascia and a group of cells work together to become an organ. We can observe these patterns of morphogenetic links on this micro level, but also on a macro level.

For example, care in a group of elephants who live in a society where relationships radiate out from the mother and child bond, through groups and clans⁸ and the research on the symbiotic nature of a clump of trees supporting each other by sharing nutrients through fungal networks around their roots (*Toomey, D on Suzanne Simard, Yale Environment 360, 2016*)⁹ and other communications such as warnings by means of the secretion of tannins sent to trees in a 50m radius to prevent giraffes from eating all the new leaves off a clump of Acacia trees.¹⁰

These examples speak to the idea of Von Uexkul that we are “*organs*” of a larger organism. He pointed out that all living creatures are within an “*Umwelt*”, directly translated as “*a world around*” that has form because of how we create and experience our relationships with each other. (“Jakob Von Uexkul” New World Encyclopedia, 2019)

These forms of communication happen instantaneously within life and are encounters on a cellular level. An appreciation of this process of encounter is initiated by experiencing life in the moment again and again. Biodanza enables us to recognize and step into the encounter of life by experiencing the vivencia in the everyday and through that process to re-create, re-arrange and establish new cellular bonds and neural pathways.¹¹

⁷ Morphogenetic could be seen as the equivalent of a biological collective unconscious and is described as a process that controls the organisation of cells during the embryonic development of an organism.

⁸ <https://www.elephantvoices.org/elephant-sense-a-sociality-4/elephants-are-socially-complex.html>

⁹ https://e360.yale.edu/features/exploring_how_and_why_trees_talk_to_each_other

¹⁰ <https://www.africansafaris.com/acacias-v-giraffes-a-uniquely-african-tussle/>

¹¹ Deepak Chopra refers in Super Brain to a moment of “being in rapture” a moment when the mind and body work seamlessly together to release the chemistry that will form new neural pathways, which then results in a new reality. Chopra says: “Reality making is natural and effortless, while at the same time it is almost beyond belief. The universe goes to the same place to create a star as you go to see a rose in your mind’s eye.” (Chopra and Tanzi, 2012, p78)

2.2 Encounters and the origin of life

Life was made possible when the first generation stars exploded and the force of the explosion created a small number of elements heavier than helium. These elements enabled matter to collapse into stars and galaxies on the one end of the spectrum, and on the other end finding their way into our blood and bones as iron and calcium.

Everything we are and everything in the space around us is made up of electrons, quarks, photons and gluons “which vibrate and fluctuate constantly between existence and non-existence and swarm in space even if it seems that there is nothing there, combine together to infinite like the letters of a cosmic alphabet to tell the immense history of galaxies, of the innumerable stars, of sunlight, of mountains, woods and fields of grain, of the smiling faces of the young at parties and of the night sky.” (Carlo Rovelli, Seven Brief Lessons on Physics p 35).

In the last century we have moved away from a paradigm of separation as proposed by Descartes four centuries ago. Writings on physics and biology like those of Carlo Rovelli now reflect Rolando’s position that *“it is impossible to think of living creatures independent of the cosmos ... we are in the cosmic broth of life. The energy of life circulates in us and in nature as a flux”* (Workbook Vital Unconscious, BSA 2, p15)

Rovelli continues to echo this about ourselves in the closing article of his series Seven Brief Lessons in Physics: *“We are made of the same stardust of which all things are made, and when we are immersed in suffering or when we are experiencing intense joy we are being nothing other than what we can’t help but be: part of our world.”* (Seven Brief Lessons on Physics, 2015, pg77-78)

I would like to share extracts from a poem in which I celebrate this evolution from stardust to a living cell that can give life to a human.

Twinkle Twinkle little star how we wonder what we are....

The wonder of the simplicity
Embedded in an intrinsic beyond imagination
That never ceases to amaze

A lacework pattern
Simple and regular to the eye
Impossible to recreate without the creator

To fuel it - we have to go back to basics
And break it all down in CO₂ and H₂O again

Only then can the infinite cell absorb and recreate
The spark of life once again ignited through ATP

The spark of life captured in a magic box
A code embedded in nine golden chains

Directing
Natural
Activity

.....

we all follow a
pre-determined biochemical plan
forged in the stars

our cells carry the innate knowledge
to nourish and create
to know what to make when
what is needed?
an intuitive cognition – self-organisation
a living poetry that
creates and recreates
a self-poetry
aptly called – autopoiesis

The twinkling star falls from the sky
The process to evolve - to become – starts
leaving unique footprints in our memory ...

(Heleen Meyer Fourie) (Poem Appendix 6)

The concept of “autopoiesis” was formulated by Umberto Maturana and refers to the idea that an organism has an innate ability to generate itself. We are only cells, or even particles, who think we are separate. Like cells we give and receive, we come together and disconnect. Like particles our perception determines who we are in the moment. The microcosm reflects the macrocosm.

Louis Campusano said: *“The stars are to the cosmos as cells are to the living world. In the same way that cells organize themselves into complete structures that are living things, the stars find themselves joined together in greater conglomerates called galaxies ... ”* (Rovelli, 2015, p22)

We are therefore our own living galaxies, and as we encounter life within ourselves and around us we adapt and change. Maturana and Valero developed the “The Theory of Santiago” which stated that the interaction of any “living” organism, from a bacteria to a human, with its environment is intelligent. They also proposed that while interacting with the environment the organism will initiate changes, which is true only to that organism. A simple example will be the mutation and effect of a flu virus in different hosts. The result of this then is the “creation of a new world” where the organism is unique in its internal adjustment to the environment, but can still conserve its relation to the network. In the same way that the flu virus although having mutated is still a flu virus we change through vivencial encounters, but are still part of the network of the world around us. (WB Vital Unconscious, BSA 2, p13-14)

As humans we are therefore no different than any other organism, still we are unique. We are curious about how we work and how the world we live in functions. This has resulted in us moulding and directing our environment. During the last twenty years western science has through the use of new technologies discovered that we can actually direct the reactions in our brains and that the direction we choose will be part of a continued loop, which can make us stronger or weaker as an organism.

2.3 Encounter in a changing world

Biocentric perspective works from the premise that the poetry of encounter can lead to a more cohesive uniquely human society. Rolando believed there are universal human qualities that distinguishes us as a species and can be harnessed to work toward a society where there is place for the biocentric individual and a harmonious community. He proposed *that progression within unity can be achieved through the integration of autonomy*, suggesting that we will evolve if we could instinctively choose what is best for the whole species and are happy with the choice as an individual.

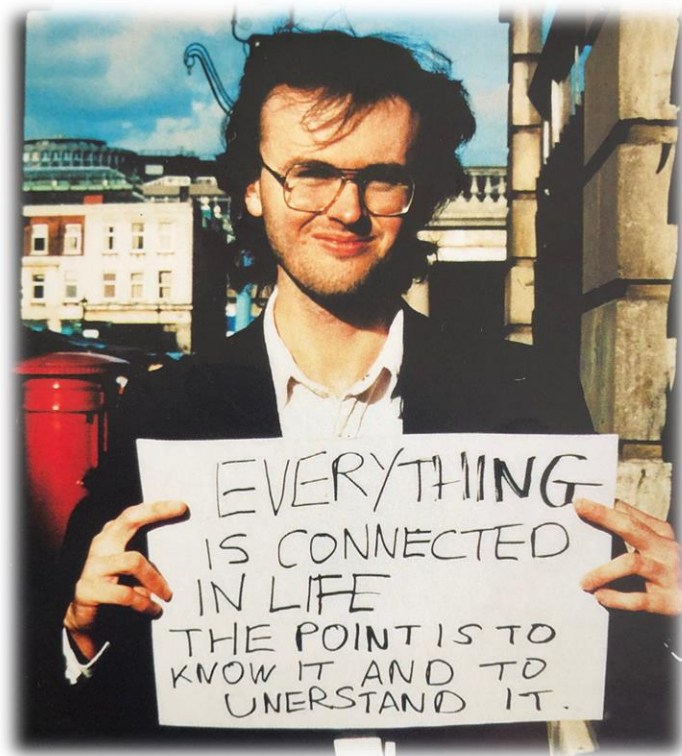
He saw three specific Biological traits as the key towards this integration. Highly affective and effective motor sensory systems that can give exact feedback and adapt. This will enable us not

to be caught in the patterns of our individual environments. A strong immune system which will minimize the impact of our environment and will enable us not to live in fear of contamination. Lastly awareness, an integrated consciousness, that we are not alone, will demonstrate in an internalised realization that our internal world affects others, for better or for worse.

Margaret Wertheim a physicist and journalist, who explores how science translates into humanity, echoed this concept when she said: “We humans, each of us are like a coral polyp. Individually, we’re insignificant and probably powerless. But together, I believe we can do things.” (Percy & Tippett, 2015)

She said this as she reflected on the new risks we are facing as humans. There has never been fewer wars in the history of the world but the impact of those that do exist combined with the environmental impact of mankind on our planet turns each of us into a coral polyp and at risk, if we do not work together towards the best outcome.

GILLIAN WEARING: Everything is connected in life



3. Encounters supporting life – a bio-psychological model.

3.1 A changing zeitgeist

Biodanza has been around for about 70 years. The narrative of how we as humans perceive ourselves has changed in that time. The disconcerting and dissociative elements in our world often feel overwhelming. In Biodanza terms we refer to eco-factors such as the “invasion” of technology, waste, climate change and fundamentalism.

However eco-factors that support the elements of the “poetry of the encounter within the context of presence that grants presence” have also been growing exponentially enabling humans to grow, change, bond and reassess our place in the natural cosmos no longer only as masters and destroyers, but as co-travellers. We have started to realise that we truly create all that is around us in partnership with those we are with and have developed new social theories such as social constructivism and positive psychology. We have moved closer to the philosophical bio-chemical, bio-social and bio-psychological principles of Biodanza.

There is a feeling of human communion worldwide that has never been possible before, even though our identity is still closely linked to the familial, tribal and national links we form. The positive aspect of “*our second skin*”, grown through smart phone technology, is that we are all “*integrated*” despite the polarising political narrative we live in. A practical example is how positive messages and knowledge about what we do to right, how we grow and try to save our world, flood the ether through podcasts, memes and video logs, reaching millions.

Perhaps there is hope to be co-travellers. This could be the “secret axis of an inconceivable evolutionary process” Rolando dreamt of. The start of an evolution that brings us all together around the understanding that the life that generates us is the source of everything, an external manifestation of an existing affective subconscious.

3.2 Encounters – the biological basis of the conscious and unconscious

Biodanza proceeds first and foremost from the biological. In a recent TED Talk Prof Anil Seth, professor in Cognitive and Computational Neuroscience at the University of Sussex stated: “*My research is telling me that consciousness has less to do with pure intelligence and more to do with our nature as living and breathing organisms. Consciousness and intelligence are very different things. You don't have to be smart to suffer, but you probably do have to be alive.*” (TED-Talks, July 2017) This points to the fact that intelligence and consciousness are biologically based.

Biological experiences start in the womb. To paraphrase Seth our consciousness awakes with our first encounters experienced in-vitro as we move in the womb, feel the amniotic fluid and react to outside stimuli. In my view this is also where we experience our first vivencia – a pure lived moment - that initiates a cosmic adventure and the ability to be alive through the vital unconscious.

Rolando proposed that the vital unconscious is experienced in the corporally through vital and endotomic feelings. These feelings can be non-localised and travel through the body as vital experiences of joy, loss or anger, or they could be endotomic, such as hunger and thirst, and have an anatomical base. The integration of these feelings translates as our experience of consciousness. From a Biodanza perspective the internal integration of feelings affect choice and choice affects our relationship with others and the world around us. Varela defined how we choose and define our reality.

Varela proposed that our relationship with the environment is through coherence, that which we choose, and not simply through similarity between what we create and what is organic. He states that this relationship of coherence can evolve as an informed choice to choose life. There is in us as humans the unique ability to select through affinity or rejection. Rolando Toro believed that if we choose the anti-entropic path, away from social decline and degeneration, we could choose to exist through care for others and the universe. (Rolando Toro, WB Biology, BSA 2)

3.3 Encounters and Compassionate Apes

Frans de Waal, a biologist who started out focusing on power and dominance in chimpanzees and now writes about reconciliation and morals in primates, takes this notion further. He claims that his research shows that this ethical bias could be biologically programmed in us as it is in chimpanzees, and that it is part of our genetic make-up.

De Waal explores the fact that primates and humanity are much more compassionate and reciprocal than was acknowledged in the past. The image of humanity studied in all disciplines that we were aggressive deep down he sees as an unfair reflection. This idea was fostered by the specific interpretation of the concept of "*the survival of the fittest*" as was proposed by Darwin. De Waal refers to reciprocity and empathy as the two pillars of morality and sees those reflected strongly in the behaviour of chimpanzees. (TED-Talks, November 2011)

De Waal's work reinforces Rolando's concept that the Vital Unconscious feeds into the Collective unconscious as defined by Jung and instinctually supports a natural bonding, which Rolando explored in the work of Maturana. His observations also supports Rolando's instinctual recognition of the role of the line of affectivity in the encounter and Biodanza process, as well as the work of biologists like Varela.

3.4 Encounters – the return of Instinctual Forces

The Age of Reason and its dictum "*I think therefor I am*" has been accepted as the preferred way to be in the world, which led to emotions being cast as misplaced, intrusive and weak for most of the 20th and 21st century. As we learn more and more of the chemical workings of the brain Rolando is once again proven correct – we exist because we have feelings and emotions. Our biological programming is supported by the relationship between the chemical reactions in our body; how our neurons process the information received and generate feelings

In *How to be Human, the Manual*, a popular book where the author co-operates with a neuroscientist and a monk, Ruby Wax writes: "*... emotions are concocted by complex neurological chemical systems which give us a sense of our physical selves. They are what give us a sense of our connection with the world and with one another. Other mammals feel love for their kin and the pain of separation but we humans are notches above them because we can think about these feelings and weave them into literature, art and mind numbingly song ...*" (Wax, 2018, p47)

Rolando proposed that by rescuing the instinctual forces that lead to emotions, and feelings specifically, Biodanza through the Adaptive-Limbic-Hypothalamic System can support health and the vital impulses that work towards life. Exercises stimulating vivencias and emotions through encounters, affectivity and contact specifically works on the neuro-vegetative (autonomic nerves) and endocrine systems. The function of the endocrine system to control mood and sleep combined with the role of the autonomic nervous system, together with the hypothalamus, to regulate the arousal of the body and the reaction to emotion triggered by the brain is central to the physiology of the encounter. Rolando has always believed in the integrative effect of the IALHS system. Research focusing on the neuro-plasticity of the brain indicates that increased neuroplasticity could enhance this effect.

Biodanza is a discipline. My proposition is that regular practice of this discipline and the experiences of encounters result in changes in the neurological pathways in the brain that brings about behavioural changes. I quote Michael Delamere's experience as an example:

The most important healing for me has been to remove the fear of abandonment. For a number of years I have not experienced the very specific and known feeling of profound desolation that could overtake me¹². Triggers were unpredictable, known only in retrospect. The situation always involved love or friendship. Three years after starting Biodanza I was able to accept the loss of the love of my life, to transact disengagement in an adult manner, without the experience of abandonment¹³. I now maintain at least two close friendships with women, able to avoid repeating past patterns of 'falling in love' and yielding to 'neediness'.

BRIDGET RILEY: Nataraja 1993



¹² The only description I have read which approaches my reality of this experience comes from J. K. Rowling in Harry Potter: The Prisoner of Azkaban. "Dementors are among the foulest creatures that walk this earth. They infest the darkest, filthiest places, they glory in decay and despair, and they drain peace, hope, and happiness out of the air around them... Get too near a Dementor and every good feeling, every happy memory will be sucked out of you. If it can, the Dementor will feed on you long enough to reduce you to something like itself... soulless and evil. You will be left with nothing but the worst experiences of your life."

¹³ I did experience deep grief and depression but perhaps view these as natural, part of the normal experience of being human.

4. The Encounter and the Nervous System

4.1 The Brain can change

The long held scientific belief that brain cells or neurons are not able to develop new connection or repair and regenerate was proven incorrect in 1997 as a result of the work of a Swedish neuroscientist Peter Eriksson. This discovery led to the explosion of the field of neuro-plasticity dissecting the brain and the cause and effect relationship between our external and internal reality. A number of popular books on this subject have been released written by conventionally trained scientists that resonate Rolando's intuitive insights that our genetic potential enable us to continue to grow and change.

One of the most prominent authors on this topic is Norman Doidge, A psychiatrist and psychologist who wrote on the latest development in neuroscience in his books *The Brain that Changes Itself* and *The Brain's Way of Healing*. In *The Brain that Changes Itself* Dr Doidge identified three simple rules for brain changes. These rules resonate with the Biological traits identified by Rolando as integral to integration and growth, as well as the fact that the ability to encounter the self and others with presence and tenderness is essential for growth. I propose that in the end this ability is mainly a neural map we develop in the brain.

4.2 Encounters and the three rules of changes in the brain

The three rules refer to the need to use our brains to keep them healthy, the natural tendency of neural pathways to strengthen as a result of repeated use and how the ability to aim to grow with tenderness and kindness is more effective. Dr Amy Banks says in her book *four ways to click, rewire your brain for a stronger more rewarding relationship*: “.. you can use the rules of brain change to solve problems, repair your C.A.R.E pathways and strengthen your relationship”.¹⁴

Rule no 1 -“Use it or lose it”: Neurons that are stimulated more work better. It was found that repeated use will upgrade the response of neural pathways to their environment, because this will they stimulate the growth of myelin. Intact and healthy myelin coating of the neurons is essential for to deliver messages fast and accurately.

¹⁴ C.A.R.E – stands for Calm. Accepted. Resonant. Energetic and describes the effect of the feedback loop of the four neural pathways Amy Banks studied.

In Biodanza terms it can be proposed therefore that “use or or lose it “rule will support to a highly affective and effective motor sensory system. Biodanza stimulates the whole brain and the complete nervous system during the session that can lead to neurological changes.

Rule no 2 -*“Neurons that fire together, wire together”*: It was found that when more than one neuron in the same part of the brain are engaged in a specific action they start working together. The number of axons and dendrites on each individual neuron increases and this then forms links with neighbouring neurons.

In Biodanza terms it can be proposed that the system works towards integration in the IALH system, If the neurological pathways supporting this system work together this can possibly lead to effects like stronger immune system, or the ability to regulate the rest and active cycle.

Rule no 3- *“Repetition, repetition dopamine”*: Change in humans is at its very core a change in the way neurons fire. It has been found that the hormones serotonin, norepinephrine and oxytocin all enhance change. It is called the dopamine effect. These hormones create experiences of calm focus and the desire to encounter – “it makes you want to reach out to another person to hold and touch them”.

Amy Banks in her work on neuro-plasticity and relationships points out that this effect of oxytocin is the most important ingredient in neuro-plasticity. It seems to accelerate learning that is reinforced through relationship. Oxytocin encourages brain change by melting away some existing pathways so that you have room for new ones. (Banks and Hirschman, four ways to click, p81)

From a Biodanza perspective this crucial to a discussion on the importance of tenderness, presence and affection in encounters and its ability to facilitate change and growth, as Rolando puts it “rearranging our structures”, enabling us to connect in a different way. ¹⁵

¹⁵ It echoes Rolando's often repeated saying: “Act, act and act again! And then think” *Oxytocin one of the many hormones secreted by the endocrine system, and is released repeatedly during encounters, activity and contact, but also any dance where the feedback between two participants is positive. In vivencia generated throughout the session from vitality - by a physiological walk in our cells for example, through the posture of identity, rhythmic synchronization, fluidity in groups, a moment of eternity, the nest and all the way to an encounter with hands and eyes, and possibly an embrace. In this experience we come to the realisation that we are not alone and that our internal world affects others.*

A: If I meet people and I do not have any thoughts about me or any thoughts about them then an encounter happens, but I am not in a position to call it that because at that moment I have no thoughts about me or them and then it gets bewildering and I do not know what I am looking at. Then something else happens, a softness happens and a falling into something happens which I cannot explain either and then I go into a place of just not knowing – something is happening, but I do not know what it is. And I now longer know who is upfront of me –

H: If you stay there long enough does it them unfold into a different knowing?

A: Different things happen at different times – sometimes tears will come energy will rise, love will flow – all sorts of emotions will happen – but most typically words are not attached to it because the mind is staying still, switched off. The mind cannot cope with that other than to stay with the beauty of whatever is happening – the fullness in life.

I propose that repeated exposure to a vivencial experienced through encounters with such a strong visceral effect would result in a neuro-plastic change, which will lead to a tenderness of presence that allows presence, an encounter and a different bonding between humans that is based on affection. In the past this emotion was only generated within the family or tribe, through the Biodanza experience a new tribe of humans emerge.

The values of this group of humans appear again and again in verbal feedback. To quote a few friends:

“Whenever I attend an open session I am struck by the inclusivity, the welcoming feeling, the sense of being cared for no matter who or what you are.”

“When I do Biodanza I realise is it is the only activity I engage in that enables me to connect fully to myself and others with tenderness.”

“I have encountered people before in other settings, but have never before been invited to do it with an open heart. This was so different, this heart connection.”

5. Encounters and creating a Container

5.1 Encounters and Neurobiological Relational Research

Research in relational neuroscience has highlighted that “there is neurological hardwiring throughout our brains and bodies designed to help us engage in satisfying emotional connection with others.” (Banks and Hirschmann, 2015, p3). There are 4 main neural pathways that facilitate connection and these deteriorate when we are cut off from others. These four are the pathway governed by the smart vagus nerve, the one ruled by the dorsal anterior cingulate, the mirroring system of nerves and the dopamine reward system.

All these systems are acknowledged in the Biodanza approach as being integral to a growing, integrative, evolving, joyful experience that stimulate the genetic potential.

Research done by Amy Banks, MD¹⁶, and co-author, with Leigh Ann Hirschman, of *Four Ways to Click: Rewire Your Brain for Stronger, More Rewarding Relationships* confirmed that mental states such as irritability, anger, depression, addiction and chronic diseases are more common when these pathways deteriorate. She states in *Four Ways to Click*: “*We are just not healthy when we try to stand on our own and that’s because the human brain is built to operate within a network of caring human relationships.*”

This reflects the Biodanza effect in participants and the group. As an individual strengthens neuro-pathways that serve connection it is easier to build relations, which again result in stronger neural pathways. This will lead to the creation of a self -reaffirming cycle.

¹⁶ Director of Advanced Training and Senior Research Scientist at The Jean Baker Miller Training Institute and the Wellesley Centers for Women. She is the co-author, with Leigh Ann Hirschman, of *Four Ways to Click: Rewire Your Brain for Stronger, More Rewarding Relationships* (Penguin), an easy to use, practical guide that helps clinicians and laypeople assess the quality of their relationships and strengthen their neural pathways for connection.
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/experts/amy-banks>

This is how others felt the experience:

H. So the question is if you start living Biocentrically and you are moved by someone in some way, can your first reaction be tenderness?

L. That comes after a lot of exposure to Biodanza – not in the first few weeks.

H. How do you react in the first few weeks?

L. I think there is tension, there is apprehension there is not sure, what do I do, I do not know if I want to look – self-consciousness – do I feel safe in those first sessions.

M. The demonstrative nature of Biodanza is questioned – what is all this kissing – do they know everybody – or do they just kiss every-one. I prefer to be only intimate with someone I know and have a special connection with – is often the attitude – I am not going to kiss everybody.

L It is safe to have encounters at a distance – but Biodanza brings you closer – physically and it brings a bond – and we know how powerful bonds can be – again you are forever altered. The bond may shift and move but you are never the same.

5.2 The Vagus Nerve

For a long time the acknowledged responses to external and internal stimulus was described as fight, flight or freeze. These responses are generated by either the sympathetic or the parasympathetic nervous systems. Dr Stephen Porges identified a third branch of the autonomic nervous system in the smart vagus (Banks and Hirschmann, p31). Banks points out that the social complexity and interdependence of mammals most probably lead to the development of the smart vagus, as it is not present in other animals. This is the nerve that is activated when the participant feels safe, is welcomed into the Biodanza group and engages in encounters.

The smart vagus, which runs from the stomach all the way to the brainstem, sends a message to the sympathetic and parasympathetic systems to disengage when the individual feels safe. At the same time it activates the motor responses that are needed for communication and encounters. I propose that vivencias of encounter not only activate the neurological circuits and glands of the neurological, endocrine and immune system, but very specifically the vagal nerve which then enhances the state of homeostasis and a sense of pleasure and what is referred to as a “good vagal tone” (a healthy vagus nerve).

This supports the premise put forward by Rolando that by harmonizing the limbic-hypothalamic system the practice of Biodanza strengthens the body’s responses to stress, enabling the internal systems of the body to sustain homeostasis better. The neuro-science research on the role of the

vagal nerve in this process gives access to a possible expanded understanding of the neurological process.

Research done on the immune enhancing effect of Biodanza supports this understanding of the role of the vagal nerve and the limbic –hypothalamic system in integrating the life force of the body. In 2004 Stuck, Villages et All did a study researching the psychological, physiological and immunological effects of Biodanza. The study found that the effects on *subjective relaxation* could be seen as significant after 8 to 10 session. Subjective relaxation is only possible once the vagus nerve has been activated.

5.3 Pain and the dorsal Anterior Cingulate Cortex

The second system Banks refers to also has a direct relevance for our understanding of the effect of the sense of belonging created through the vivencial experience of an encounter, and concerns the dorsal anterior cingulate cortex in the frontal cortex of the brain. The dACC is traditionally associated with physical pain. Research has now shown that the brain does not distinguish between physical pain and the “pain” associated with social exclusion (Banks and Hirschmann, 2015, p42).

This puts into focus the pathway of pain. Chronic pain associated with depression and anxiety, can lead to constant infection, which can be a precursor to chronic diseases. It also highlights the dissociative effect of the extreme emphasis on independence in potential growth in the 20th and 21st century. The pain experienced by the individual excluded from the group was seen as “for his or her own good”.

Banks states: *“belonging to a group is for all of us more than one of life’s perks. It is a biological requirement. A need that is seen as stronger than the need for food.”* (Banks and Hirschman, four ways to click, p48) Biodanza facilitates a unique group experience that relates back to the biocentric belief in the basic instinct that we are part of something greater than us. It is inherent in us to group as Maturana’s discussed in the concept of natural structural coupling.

Myrna Lewis, points out that: *“You are not speaking, but you are experiencing something in the safety of what Jung would describe as the crucible. This is a sacred space, which is sacred in a numinous way, and would therefore allow from a Jungen perspective the alchemical processes”*. (Interview with Myrna Lewis, 2018, Appendix 2)

Participants new to Biodanza often find it difficult to enter into the group because of the strong natural bonds fostered. This is one of the reasons for starting beginners groups without intermediate and advanced participants present.

Biodanzeros who have experienced dissociation previously in one form or another could be exposed to this physical sense of pain triggered by a sense of not belonging at times Banks refers to. It is imperative that the facilitator is aware that she or he does not know what is present in the unconscious of the room. One way to work towards a safe space is through a biocentric presence and biocentric language.

I would like to illustrate this experience of psychological pain with contributions from two experienced Biodanzeros. Each felt a different degree of exclusion and wariness when attending a session:

“A:it takes letting go to do it, and I know every-time there is an anxiety about it - I can feel the veils barricade it – but I know if I just let it be let it and trust letting it be – because of all the support and the love I feel here allows it just to disassemble quickly.”

The following sharing by Michael, highlights the shadow side of encounter. It reflects a very personal but important perspective that is not often heard in the circle.

*“Encounter – the shadow side:
“Filling the conscious mind with ideal conceptions is a characteristic of Western theosophy, but not the confrontation with the shadow and the world of darkness. One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious”. Carl Jung.*

Pygmalion

In the ancient Greek myth, the Cypriot sculptor Pygmalion carved an ivory statue of a woman. Its beauty was so great he fell in love with it. He asked the goddess of love, Aphrodite, if she could grant him a wife so beautiful. Taking pity on him, she brought the statue to life. Pygmalion and his wife Galatea lived happily, bringing up a daughter.

Biodanza has a primary myth, the Minotaur. After a lifetime of effort, I have slain the Minotaur. My Biodanza myth is Pygmalion. The modern version, both the play by George Bernard Shaw and the movie "My Fair Lady" are darker than the original, speaking more to unrequited love between an older man and a younger woman. It is a myth of the unattainable and speaks with some truth about how such relationships often play out in real life.

I live alone. Life circumstances are such that this situation is likely to continue for the rest of my life. So the occasional experiences of erotic and ecstatic encounter, while eagerly sought, leave me in a state of intense, turbulent and disorienting struggle. I lose perspective. The dissonance between reality and the sweetness of encounter is hard to bare. It easier for me to live a life of accepting unwanted reality, rather than having it overturned by a burst of hope. My partner in encounter goes home to husband, boyfriend or girlfriend and I wake up alone, to a life without love. To be someone who is trusted becomes a curse.

I spoke of this with a friend who dances 5 Rythmys. She looked at me and said "but when the dance session is over, it's over. We have to just walk away". I replied: "so I've had the experience of a woman's body melting into mine like warm chocolate, and I'm supposed to forget it?"

Coping with this takes enormous strength. So far I have been able to. Whether or not there is a lesson or peace at the end of the struggle only time will tell.

A Plea:

Dancing was my greatest fear. I came to Biodanza at the invitation of someone I was in love with. I remained, pushing through high anxiety, even though my love interest never returned. What drove me to persist with what was an enormously difficult endeavour? I believe I was driven by two imperatives of my unconscious. Firstly, a hunger for encounter, for contact. And secondly, a need to heal the wounds of childhood; inability to love and trust.

Survivors of childhood abuse often have some of these traits: lack of trust, difficulty with intimacy, hypervigilance (a constant scanning of the environment for threat), anxiety about touch and a need to control their immediate environment¹⁷. These traits run directly counter to the ethos of Biodanza. I feel that my hypothesis about myself could have wider relevance. My perception is that other wounded are drawn to Biodanza, perhaps also by an unconscious drive to healing.

Society is seeing a new revolution, a violent overthrow of power, in #MeToo. It is driven by only two simple factors: women speak out, men fear their actions being made public. Without change, Biodanza risks becoming a dinosaur from last century.

Biodanza is a way of healing, it has helped heal me and others. By adding a perspective which includes the lived experience of women and survivors, it has the potential to heal many more."

Michael Delamere

¹⁷ For example: strict rules and anxiety around food may be an example of the manifestation of a need to control one's environment.

5.4 Mirror Neurons and the Dopamine effect

The strongest tools Biodanza has to facilitate encounters and counter the shadow side can be found in the last two systems Amy Banks describes. These systems enable an integrated, healthier, happier individual and results in resonance and reward. The first is the role of mirror neurons and the second the dopamine effect.

Banks point out that mirror neurons are being activated when we observe another person rubbing his or her hands, or when we can “feel” someone’s joy or sadness. She also stresses that active mirror neurons naturally play an important part in developing empathy. (Banks and Hirschmann, four ways to click, p55)

Mirror neurons are essential in the experience of Biodanza for example when the facilitator demonstrates and enter into vivencia that feeling is echoed inside each of us. The experience of encounter would result in an exponential activation of these neurons. This mirroring exposes us to alternative neurological pathways and enables an adjustment of our experiential map.

A: I pay attention and (the vivencia) in the demonstration is so raw and lived that suddenly there is a growing , an emotion, a connection – that is all word story – I think it is hard to know where the connections is if one is open. Like today it started to go beyond and beyond – into the unknown.

L: ...what I felt was that every single human in that space was touched – so they had an encounter of sorts from the experience of observing that experience. So it does not always have to be the physical touch, something beyond the physical was present which was very moving – for me it moved me to tears – in that sense it moved me.

And I am wondering whether this is where Rolando’s concept that encounters can change us as a group comes in.

The fourth pathway, the release of dopamine in the brains reward system, is well known and often referred to in Biodanza and its ability to enhance changing neural patterns has been discussed. The Biocentric standpoint is that with practice – regular Biodanza- you can create a dopamine loop that reinforces your need for this feel good hormone to be released through positive vivencias and human contact instead of artificial stimulants.

You cannot help but be altered through the experience, even if it is that first handhold in the circle.

*You are making an offer and someone accepts it. That is an encounter – **offering and accepting.***

In your Biodanza experience what did you like best?

*Connection – beautiful, authentic true connection sincere caring – **connection!***

How do you make this connection?

*I liked best the connection **heart to heart** - an electromagnetic encounter.*

All of these systems are most effective in their function through continued action.

Equilibrium on the inside has an effect on the well-being of the visceral-instinctive and autonomic nervous system, which then dominoes into an external effect on the somatic-motor and the sensations, which again ends up supporting equilibrium on the inside. In Biodanza we hypothesise that the effects induced as a result of vivencias could activate this feedback loop and enhance well-being. The effect of that Rolando refers to as the workings of the integrative-adaptive-limbic-hypothalamic system. Research done by Stuck and Villegas in Germany as well as work done in Chile has supported this hypothesis.

5.5 Dissociation - breaking the link with the experience

Dissociation with the vital unconscious is a concept in Biodanza that refers to an inability to experience, which leads to feelings of alienation, isolation and depression (Araneda, WB - the Vital Unconscious, BSA 2). In Biodanza the link between music, movement and contact allows the inner rhythms of the body to reintegrate with the vital unconscious. Rolando found that certain eco-factors, external and internal elements could be dissociative. He worked on the dissociative effect of music and art as well as the impact of our personal and social circumstances.

The dissociative impact of our technology focused culture could only be glimpsed during Rolando's life and research on the impact of this is only now emerging. There is a dichotomy that points to the fact that despite greater connectedness we are more isolated. The impact of these changes on the lived experience of the next generation is important in a discussion on encountering each other with a presence that grants presence.

5.6 Encounters and our second skin

Technology is often referred to as our second skin or external brain and has become integral to our consciousness and our sensory experience. On the one hand technology reinforces and exaggerates the myth of the individual in Facebook lives, Instagram accounts and LinkedIn Profiles, on the other hand it supports alliances. These can be positive, but are often fuelled by hate speech against refugees, for or against Trump, for or against Brexit, resulting in dissociation. Both of these result in the breakdown of the experiential bonds developed through encounters.

An evolutionary process that enables instant worldwide connection is affecting our emotional growth and the way we interact with, or encounter, the world. Diana Divenchi reviewed a new book by Joan Twenge in the *Greater Good Magazine, science based insights for a meaningful life*. Twenge mined metadata and did her own personal surveys to research how teenagers today are different. Twenge called teenagers born between 1995 and 2012 IGen specifically because they are the generation who never lived without the internet and had access to smartphones and compared them to the previous generations such as Millennials, Generation X and the Baby Boomers.

Givenchi reports that Twenge found that the current engagement pattern of teenagers with access to media is making them lonelier, anxious, and depressed, and is undermining their social skills and even their sleep. Teenagers spend less time with their friends in person and are exposed to the unrealistic expectations of happiness and beauty seen on social media. (Givenchi, 2017)

This is just one in many Meta studies that are now being conducted which points to slower emotional growth and less experiential and in person contact with life, leading to less opportunity to encounters. Technology and its impact are not inherently evil, just as tools, cars, and trains were not bad. The aim should be to integrate this into our lives and benefit from it. The benefit from a Biodanza perspective is that Social Media enables us to create our own tribes. These tribes go beyond bloodline and location, something previous generations of humans never could do. (Percy & Tippett, 2017)

There is a glimmer of hope in Rolando's third pillar of an integrated society where an integrated consciousness is starting to develop. The one positive that has been observed is the ability by

younger people to be more accepting of others and have a greater sense of care for their immediate community.

5.7 Encounters – recreating the link

There is an area in neuroscience research that specifically focuses on our relationship with the world around us. As was discussed in the work of Amy Banks, findings in this field continues to resonate with Rolando’s vision. Martin Seligman, the father of Positive Psychology, refers to one of the most recent discoveries as “the hope circuit” in a book by the same name published in 2018.

It has been found by Steve Maier on a circuit in the brain of rats that there is a chemical (protein based) link between the Medial Pre Frontal Cortex and an area of the brainstem called the NDR. Maier postulates that it is possible that if stimulated by using psychological tools the part of the MPFC that feels there is control will buffer against helplessness and anxiety. (Seligman, The Hope Circuit, Chapter 28) In Biodanza terms we are then enhancing the healthy part of the brain.

More and more research points to our ability to change the neural pathways in our brains, which could lead to a better life experience filled with more joy and the most effective way to do this is through positive experiences. The aim of an encounter in Biodanza is enable the deflagration of past patterns and through a positive growth experience ignite the potential of the five lines. It is important to mention that in this experience positive and easy are not synonymous.

These growth experiences become meaningless if they are in isolation and we need positive relationships and meaning to enhance the psychological and physiological effect of Biodanza.

MICHAEL ANDREWS : Melanie and Me Swimming



6. The encounter and consciousness

6.1 Creating a link

Words and silence are important threads that lead us into encounter with the sacred, our identity within the continuum of personal and collective consciousness, and the world.

Sixty years after Rolando Toro coined the phrase “the poetry of the encounter” Krista Tippett, one of the master interviewers and preservers of stories in the West, wrote about “the Poetry of Creatures”. She said: *“The words we use shape how we understand ourselves, how we interpret the world, how we treat others. From Genesis to the aboriginal songlines of Australia, human beings have forever perceived that naming brings the essence of things into being”*. (Krista Tippett, *On Becoming Wise*, p15)

Krista Tippett is the creator of the public radio show *On Being* that is followed by more than 5 million people worldwide as a podcast and has grown to the *On Being Project* online.¹⁸ She aims to embrace through presence in her interviews and says about words: *“I love, words that describe presence rather than a means to an end: nourishing, edify redemptive; courageous, generous, winsome; adventurous, curious tender “*

These words describe the qualities of an encounter and how important it is to choose our words wisely. Words and pauses are important as they form the thread that leads us into encounters. At the same time Biodanza is not about the words it is about the presence, the value and life-force embedded in the words. We do not need to understand the facilitator, or the song to hear the message captured in the annunciation that has the quality of a poem.

A poem is the reading,

the vivencia of now

A poem is the silence,

the moment of integration

A poem is the song,

of the heart

A poem is seeing,

the other and the self

¹⁸ I have been listening to these hour long podcasts with people as diverse as the Cellist, Yo Yo Ma, the activist and poet, Podriac O'Toma and the scientist, Brian Greene, weekly for the past four years. Her interviews are truly life centred as reflected in her belief that to “tolerate” each other is not enough as it is simply a means to subdue difference.

A poem gives glimpses and clues,
of the five lines of life
A poem is intuitive a place,
where the vital unconscious lives
A poem is a synergy,
bigger than the sum of its parts
A poem is a biocentric,
words, space, place, rhythm, rhyme, melody, emotion, experience.

Pause – the space in between
(Heleen Meyer Fourie)

In Biodanza, as in life there is always a moment of rest between the movement from the conscious to the unconscious, like a pendulum or a wave. This pattern has been identified in the natural world and other species. It usually moves from a regressive state, where we dissolve into the cosmic, to the impulse of identity, growth and maturity. In Biodanza we celebrate this cycle of rebirth in ceremonies of trance and rebirth, for example the trance of suspension, the dance of fecundation, dance in the amniotic fluid and the dance of rebirth.

I would like to state that this swing in the pendulum and movement to generate growth is only possible by meeting and rearranging our experience of the encounter around stillness. Tenderness that awakes affectivity in presence needs the space of a moment of eternity to flourish.

Encounters and the space in between:

Without rest there is no pulse
Without arrhythmia no rhythm
We heal in anticipation
Waiting for where the journey will lead next
Fluidity or fire
As the music linger
In remembrance of the vivencia just lived
There is only one moment
The joy caught in the dance
In preparation for the present

(Heleen Meyer Fourie)

6.2 The Encounter and realms of consciousness

Words with passion and focus as used in poetry and enunciations in Biodanza lead readers or participants into deeper experiences that rearrange the consciousness with tenderness.

Freud and Jung were the psychological thinkers who through their work expanded the understanding of consciousness. Freud described our personal unconscious at a time when only the conscious was acknowledged. Jung theorized that in addition to the personal unconscious there is a social unconscious created by our social milieu, a collective unconscious that is carried in our psyche as part of our collective DNA (Lewis, DD Level4 Manual). Rolando Toro proposed two additional levels of subconscious organization – the vital unconscious, which has a biological dimension and the numinous unconscious, which has a sacred dimension.

This dissertation focuses on the *“poetry of the encounter”*. I propose that an encounter travels through all layers of consciousness in the same manner as a poem. A poem and encounter move through giving and receiving, yin and yang, active and inactive as it emerges from or into consciousness. A poem can bubble up in the poet as an expression of the numinous unconscious, the sacred, or the vital unconscious, as reflected in the endogenous mood, and travel through the collective unconscious, the social unconscious and the personal unconscious to cognition. To be spoken and heard or read in silence reversing the path back to the numinous completing the circle like a rainbow of which we only always see a segment. This concept can be applied to the

encounter with the session where it is experienced in vivencia cenesthetically within the individual and the group and could result in an enriching exchange within the vital unconscious.

I do not know - there is kind of an unveiling – sometime I have my clothes and so, but when I deeply encounter someone it is a process that goes in steps. And it is almost like I am taking off clothes – out of the vestments that I usually use for work and for everything else and then vulnerability comes. That is the first thing that comes for me is really becoming vulnerable. It is realising that – like when I watched that encounter with K and C - I could barely talk – my whole emotional self is over there. There is a part of me that goes – no get back you cannot act like that – but it is beyond what I can control when there is truly an encounter with a person.

MARTIN CREED: Work No 203: Everything is Going to be Alright 1999



7. Encounters at work – A Bio-psychological approach-PERMA

7.1 Historical perspective

Rolando Toro claimed that, “Social transformation can only succeed from the starting point of health, and not from neurosis or resentment. Otherwise, social change will only substitute one pathology for another”. Rolando developed Biodanza at a time when psychotherapy and psychology was completely focused on curing and fixing the “dis-ease” in the person. Once that was seen as being successful the person was left to fend for him or herself.

Rolando chose an approach in synergy with Edgar Morin and Murray Gell-mann (Araneda quoted, WB 1, BSA2 p15) who suggested a different role for therapy of any kind – the protection of health and not just the curing of illness.

Martin Seligman, amongst others, came to the same conclusion in the United States in the 1990s and founded a methodology Positive Psychology 1998. Seligman recalls that he realised as a result of a conversation with his 5 year old daughter that his success was perhaps not because he could see the flaws (the disease) but in spite of it. The result of this conversation lead to the birth of a new approach – a transformation “It ended its (psychology’s) fixation on only curing what is wrong to include building what is right and positive in the world. “ (Seligman, The Hope Circuit, Chapter 1)

7.2 Concurrent Goals

The goal of Biodanza and Positive Psychology are similar although not identical. Biodanza works from a biopsychological organic corporal principle and Positive Psychology works from the cognitive analytical perspective.

Rolando Toro introduced Biodanza at a time when doing psychological work that works with the body was not accepted by the establishment and the current crossover between psychology and biology was still one glimpsed by a few. Rolando Toro developed this system with the aim of extending the human sciences and giving the world an alternative narrative **that creates beauty, joy and peace out of chaos.**

Rolando said that: *“It is not linked to or based on any ideology – rational or magical – but works from the biological and physiology with the aim of rewriting our personal and collective stories.”* (Araneda, quoted BW Psychology and Physiologocal, BSA11) This approach is still unique.

Biodanza works towards reawakening the genetic potential. Rolando stated that the genetic potential is *“contained in each one of our cells ... some genes in conjunction, allow the expression of specific characteristics. Thus for example, intelligence, tone of voice, and our cenesthetic sensitivity depend on the combined action of different genes ... there are millions of combinations within the double spiral... The creation of new options, through the concentration of ecofactors will deflagrate unforeseeable genetic expressions.”* (Rolando Toro, WB 2 The Vital Unconscious and the Biocentric Principle, BSA 2, p28) The result is a process of integration and growth through the five lines, which leads to a better-lived experience.

Before the development of Positive Psychology the treatment was to treat a condition. On a scale of a lived experience the aim in traditional psychological approaches was to move people’s life experience being rated on a scale that spanned from minus ten to ten to minus five or minus three and perhaps, hopefully, one . As Rolando put it *“to cure the sick”* (Rolando Toro, WB 1, BSA 2, p16) The aim of Positive Psychology on the other hand is to be able a life experience that moves from 3 to 5, despite the *“dis-ease”* a person is experiencing. This approach reflects the aim in Biodanza to develop potentials of health by putting the emphasis on the healthy part of each individual first. Biodanza works with reawakening the genetic potential and the process of integration through the five lines of vivencia.

Positive Psychology works towards studying what humans pursue to have a better life and supporting this by developing experiential tools that will change patterns and will enable a better-lived experience

Positive psychology uses a number of empirical tools to support the growth of an experience of well-being in a person. This dissertation will focus on the use of universal character strengths, or values in actions, as the building blocks on the pathway to well-being. These building blocks contribute to PERMA - Positive Emotions, Engagement, Positive Relationships, Meaning and Accomplishment - key elements identified by Seligman in one of the core theories of positive psychology as essential to well-being and a flourishing life. (Snapshot 1.1 R Niemiec , Character Strength Interventions)

The resonance between Biodanza and Positive Psychology theory can be seen in the work of Barbara Frederickson. Frederickson is Professor at the Department of Psychology and Neuroscience of the University of North Carolina. Her *“Broaden and Build”* theory states that,

“positive emotion broadens the cognitive and behavioural repertoire and builds new strengths.” (Seligman, The Hope Circuit, Chapter 22). She has studied and proven that no matter how fleeting pleasant emotional states are they contribute to resilience, well-being, and health.¹⁹

Biodanza and Positive psychology work towards the same goal: an integrated happy human who can live a fulfilled life - a person who can have *an encounter of tenderness where presence grants presence* with the banker and butcher, as well as their close friends.

7.3 Aim, Definition and history of terms:

I will compare Biodanza, Positive Psychology and Traditional Psychoanalysis in the table below.

The Biodanza and Traditional Psychotherapy descriptions were taken directly from the Psychology Workbook. (Rolano Toro, Psychology WB, BSA 11)

COMPARISON	BIODANZA	POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY MENTORSHIP	TRADITIONAL PSYCHO-ANALYSIS
FOUNDATION	Its foundation is <i>bios</i> : life	Its foundation is <i>well-being</i> : as defined by PERMA	Its foundation is curing the <i>psyche</i> : soul
FOCUS	Has essentially a pedagogic and therapeutic focus	Has a pedagogic and therapeutic focus	Essentially has therapeutic focus
BASED ON	Is based on the study of the human being as a unit	Is based on the study of the effect of the inherent positive in all humans	Is based on the study of the personality
STARTING POINT	Starts from genetic potential and the objectives are psycho-physical integration, prophylaxis, existential rehabilitation, and re-education of affectivity.	Starts from inherent character strengths – values in action – present in all people and aims to develop well-being through PERMA in individuals	Starts from sickness (Conflict)
DIAGNOSTICS	Neither uses the diagnostic methods of classic psychotherapy nor nosological categories.	Questions the diagnostic and treatment methods of classic psychotherapy as well as nosological categories. However do	Utilises methods of diagnosis and nosologic categories

¹⁹ <https://www.authentic happiness.sas.upenn.edu/faculty-profile/barbara-l-fredrickson-phd>

COMPARISON	BIODANZA	POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY MENTORSHIP	TRADITIONAL PSYCHO-ANALYSIS
		not discard, but work alongside?	
SYSTEMS	Uses systems of control of the evolution of the potentials – dance, music, caress, verbal feedback and annunciations	Uses validated activities to enforce positive experience as an individual and in interaction with others as well as verbal interpretation of experiences	Uses verbal interpretation and elaboration of information
CENTRED AROUND	Is Biocentric - life centred – natural forces working together to achieve the best outcome.	Is value-centred – “is an exercise not in changing values but in helping cultures and individuals better achieve the traits they already value (THC Chpt 20 – Good Character)	Diagnose and treats “conditions” such as those catalogued in nosologic lists like the Diagnostic Statistical Manual (DSM) used in America.
TOOLS	Works with the identity and the group through encounters to achieve integration of the five lines	Works towards positive actions with the individual to experience, support and grow well-being – “the opposite concerns from those of clinical (traditional) psychology – those things humans choose to pursue when they are not suffering or oppressed. “ The Hope Circuit Chapter 19)	Makes the unconscious conflicts conscious and studies the clinical evolution of the illness Uses talking to cure

Biodanza and Positive Psychology are two completely different disciplines, however their aims are comparable. Positive Psychology focuses on well-being, and scientifically validated tools and interventions that are word based but invokes action. Biodanza focuses on the flipside of the coin. It is action based, but is invoked by words and is given shape in verbal sharing. Here words often reflect values in action or character strengths. My proposal is that an insight into the

Values in Action, or Character Strengths, of a group of Biodanzeros will give another perspective on the personal and collective consciousness present during the encounters in vivencia.

7.4 Context for PERMA and Character strengths

Creating a link between Biocentric qualities and the clinical research tools PERMA and Character Strengths, developed within Positive Psychology, is unconventional and this motivated me to provide a historical context for these concepts.

Coming from a clinical psychology background Seligman was deeply aware of the effect the nosological list the DSM (The Diagnostic Statistical Manual) has had on the development of treatment and research in the United States. He set out to develop a new paradigm and acquired funding to develop, in collaboration with late Chris Peterson²⁰ what he called *a list of sanities*.

These were character traits all of mankind valued such as wonder, joy and love. In their collaboration Seligman and Peterson defined strengths as values with three main criteria:

- A strength is valued in its own right
- A strength is endorsed universally
- Strength contributes to fulfilment in life. (Seligman, The Hope Circuit, Chapter 20)²¹

Peterson, who was also a statistician, used the character strengths or values in action he identified to develop the Values in Action (VIA) Signature Strength Test (THC Chapter 20) . This test and refinements thereof have now been completed online by more than 5 million people and is used in Positive Psychology to do empirical research.

The self-assessment, which 16 Biodanzeros in Australia completed, is an updated and shorter version of the original developed by Peterson.

²⁰ Peterson was also professor of psychology and organizational studies at the University of Michigan, what he called – *a list of sanities* former director of clinical training. Peterson was among the 100 most widely cited psychologists in the world and passed away in 2012. (<https://www.psychologytoday.com/au/experts/christopher-peterson-phd>)

Chris Peterson had a number of catchphrases that have a strong “biocentric” flavour: “Character is plural”; “Positive psychology studies what makes life worth living” and when asked what the study of positive psychology was all about he would say: “Other people matter.” (<https://www.psychologytoday.com/au/blog/the-good-life>)

²¹ Over a period of three years Peterson studied strengths reflected in all possible sources and across all belief systems. To give an idea of the scope their research included virtues embedded in Buddhist Chants as well as the Klingon beliefs of Dr Spoke in Star Trek, Karl Marx and Islamic virtues. The character strengths valued in the writings of mankind were narrowed down to 24 strengths, which was grouped under six virtues: wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance and transcendence. (THC Chapter 20)

Dr Ryan Niemiec, who specializes in the use of character strengths as an intervention at the VIA Institute, summarised the value of character strengths within the VIA Classification as follows:

- This is a common language
- It reflects personal identity
- It produces positive outcomes for ourselves and others
- It contributes to the collective good

(R Niemiec – Character Strength Interventions)

These refractions of the VIA Classification will sit comfortably within the aim of identity integration in Biodanza and specifically the lines of vitality and affectivity. It also echos the structure of Verbal Feedback, which is done in a common language, reflects the experiences of our personal identity and the experience often is positive and contributes to the collective.

One of the empirical tools developed from the analysis of 83 000 respondents is the placement of the 24 character strengths on a graph that has four points on two axis – horizontal and vertical. The poles of the horizontal axis are *focus on self* and *focus on others* and the vertical axis *heart* and *mind*. This has been used to chart strengths related to professions for example, in this dissertation I charted the character strengths of 16 Biodanza participants on this specific graph.

7.5 Linking PERMA, Character Strengths and Encounters

The five elements on the road to well-being – Positive emotions, Engagement, Positive Relationships, Meaning and Accomplishment (Niemies R, Character Strength Interventions, Snapshot 1.1) are all relatable to Biocentric experiences that are facilitated through encounters experienced in vivencia. Positive emotions, engagements and meaning are all well-being or biocentric motivators for engaging in an encounter, which then leads to positive relationships and a redefined bonding.

Relating this back to the research done by Amy Banks, in *Four Ways to Click* and Norman Doidge in *The brain that changes itself* these elements lead to flourishing because they reinforce the dopamine effect and the Hope Circuit described by Steven Maier and referred to by Seligman. This fosters a healthy nervous system and reinforces positive “loops” which will lead to a state of well-being.

Seligman identified through empirical research, the character strengths that enables the different elements of PERMA to flourish in people.

The following table interprets and summarises this interconnection between PERMA and Character Strength. (Niemiec R, Character Strength Interventions, Table 1.3):

PERMA	Correlations found by Chris Peterson and comments by Ryan Niemiec
Positive emotion	Character strengths related to humour, zest, hope, social intelligence and love are found in a range of people who experience positive emotions on a regular basis.
Engagement	The ability to engage with the world and the well-being that can be generated through this is supported by character strengths such as zest, curiosity, hope perseverance and perspective
Positive Relationships	Character strength use can bolster positive relations and identity, however this can be achieved through any combination of character strengths.
Meaning	Character strengths related to spirituality, gratitude, hope, zest and curiosity have been found in a studies where subjects identify that their lives have meaning.
Accomplishment	Research has not identified specific character strengths that can be applied here.

It is noticeable that certain character strengths are repeatedly found within the five elements of the PERMA model and are integral to well-being. Hope and zest are integral to three of the five elements - positive emotion, engagement and meaning. Curiosity on the other hand fosters engagement and meaning. The other strengths identified as essential for PERMA - humour, social intelligence, love, perseverance; perspective, gratitude and spirituality - are all mainly heart values in action. These values in action are values that could be seen as biocentric supporting integration, interconnection and tenderness.

If these values score high in the surveys completed by Biodanzeros it would be an indication that flourishing brought about by well-being enable Biodanzeros to step into the world with a heart centred ability to connect and encounter themselves and others in a positive, healthy and life-centred way.

8. Research

8.1 Research Methodology:

My research methodology has scientific elements, but is far from it, it is essentially journalistic in nature. The inclusion of a research section aimed to expand this dissertation into a more communal and relational piece of work.

As you would have seen there are quotes and reflections on Biodanza scattered throughout the methodology section. The aim was to incorporate a “verbal sharing’ around encounter by collating qualitative contributions of other Biodanzeros. Encounters are primarily vivencial experiences and I feel that we can only benefit from collecting personal recollections. I conducted one interview session with fellow participants – all who have danced for many years, and specifically asked one of my first students to record his experience with encounters.

I also conducted a small survey using the tools of Positive Psychology as a concurrent discipline that mirrors the concept of developing our potentials in the definition of well being as proposed by Seligman. My interest was piqued when I started studying the use of Character Strengths as identified by Chris Peterson and Marty Seligman as part of a masterclass by Dr Ryan Niemiec²², one of the leaders of Character Strength application. I hoped that there would be measurable trends if a group of Biodanzeros filled in the Values in Action Questionnaire ²³ developed by Peterson and Seligman. The proposal was to place discuss these trends within the context of PERMA and a Biocentric system.

Using the well-established VIA Questionnaire people could fill in online I aimed to draw a substantial sample from the people who have done Biodanza for more than 10 weeks as part of the Sydney programme, or the Biodanza Australia School cycles.

²² Dr. Niemiec is a licensed psychologist, certified coach, author, and international workshop leader. His specialty areas include: character strengths, mindfulness meditation, positive psychology, health psychology, mind-body therapies, and psychology portrayed in media. [<http://www.ryanniemiec.com/about.html>]

²³ <http://www.viacharacter.org/www/>

8.2 Objectives and Hypothesis

The objective was to collate the 10 signature character strengths of Biodanzeros who have completed the survey and to chart these with the help of Positive Psychology analysis tools.

The proposal was to look at whether Biodanza as a heart centred activity fosters character strengths that are heart centred and reflect the character strengths defined in the PERMA structure to support well-being. I also aimed to map out the top ten character strengths of each participant to give a holistic view of where participants are placed on the holistic graph developed by Peterson as part of the Character Strengths analysis tools. This graph that displays a heart and mind axis and an intravert and introvert axis.

The hypothesis is that firstly the holistic graph will show clusters of character strengths that support a Biocentric worldview and secondly that the top character strengths of Biodanzeros will be strengths that are present within the 5 aspects of well-being as defined by PERMA. Future discussion will relate these findings back to a Biocentric approach.

8.3 Participants

Participants were selected from the current Sydney email list that has 135 people who have previously done Biodanza and the Biodanza Australia School cycles.

46 Biodanzeros were invited to complete a questionnaire. All participants had at least done Biodanza for 3 months. All participants participated in Biodanza sessions in Sydney and Canberra. 16 Participants chose to fill in the survey – 30 % of the sample. Four participants contributed by sending through written work, or participating in a discussion on their experience of the encounter. The four participants were asked because they have all done Biodanza for more than 5 years.

8.4 Instruments.

Participants were asked to fill in the VIA-IS-P one of the instruments available in a revised assessment suite provided as part of the *VIA assessment suite for Adults*.

The VIA-IS-P was chosen as it is shorter – it has only 96 questions as opposed to 240 – and is one newer group of assessments. It differs from the other assessments in the respect that all items are keyed in a positive direction. The survey is made up of a variety of behavioural, affective, and cognitive expressions for each strength and respondents were asked to rate how much the statement is like them. (McGrath, R. E. 2017)

Important guidelines when analysing data gathered through the VIA Character Strength survey that is appropriate for this analysis:

- Most people have all 24 strengths and not only a few. These strengths are dynamic and can change over time
- Individual results cannot be compared; however they can be clustered to suggest certain trends.
- The most important use of the assessment tool is to gain insight into groups of people
- These scores are only indicators of strengths as perceived by participants.²⁴

8.5 Data Analysis

Analysis of the Biocentric values relating to encounter and the concept of PERMA in Positive Psychology as displayed in the six signature strengths reflected in the surveys:

This analysis is based on the work done by Ryan Niemiec in his book *Character Strength Interventions: A field guide for Practitioners* on Character Strengths as defined by Peterson.

Signature strengths are the characters strengths that were found to have significantly higher VIA scores than non-signature strengths. I have identified the 6 signature strengths reflected in the data collated from the surveys completed by the group of Biodanzeros.

The definition of each strength has been taken from the work of Chris Peterson in *A Positive Psychology Primer* and Ryan Niemiec in *Character Strength Interventions*.

1. Honesty or Authenticity – Virtue: Wisdom and Knowledge

14 out of 16 participants

Speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way; being without pretence; taking responsibility for one's actions and feelings. In essence **being true to yourself and authentic to others**. It is linked with self-concordance and allows for a more accurate self-assessment of your intentions and commitments both to others and yourself.

²⁴ <https://www.viacharacter.org/www/VIA-Assessments-Guidelines-for-Use-and-Interpretation>

2. Love of Learning – Virtue: Wisdom and Knowledge

13 out of 16 participants

Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge whether on one's own or formally; it is related to the strength of curiosity but goes beyond it **to describe the tendency to add systematically to what one knows**. This strength has been shown to predispose to well-being.

3. Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence – Virtue: Transcendence

Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence involves noticing and appreciating these attributes in various domains from nature to art, to mathematics, to science, to everyday experiences.

Appreciation of beauty and excellence refers to the ability to find, recognize and take pleasure in the existence of goodness in the physical and social worlds. **People high in this strength frequently feel awe and related emotions, including admiration and wonder in the every day.**

They are responsive to all forms of beauty and are able to see beauty many people overlook. Studies have shown that an elevation in this strength **leads to more pro-social and altruistic behaviour**.

4. Social Intelligence – Virtue: Humanity

12 out of 14 participants

The core features are being aware of the motives and feelings of other people and the self; knowing what to do to fit into different social situations; knowing what makes other people tick. The essence is the ability **to be tuned in and it is one of the strengths most associated with a pleasurable life**.

5. Curiosity – Virtue: Wisdom and Knowledge

11 out of 16 participants

Curiosity is taking an interest in ongoing experience for its own sake, and finding new subjects and topics fascinating. It is exploring and discovering. **This strength can carry someone beyond openness to new experiences into actions associated with personal growth**. It is strongly connected with happiness or life satisfaction and **aligned with a life of engagement**.

6. Perspective – Virtue: Wisdom and Knowledge

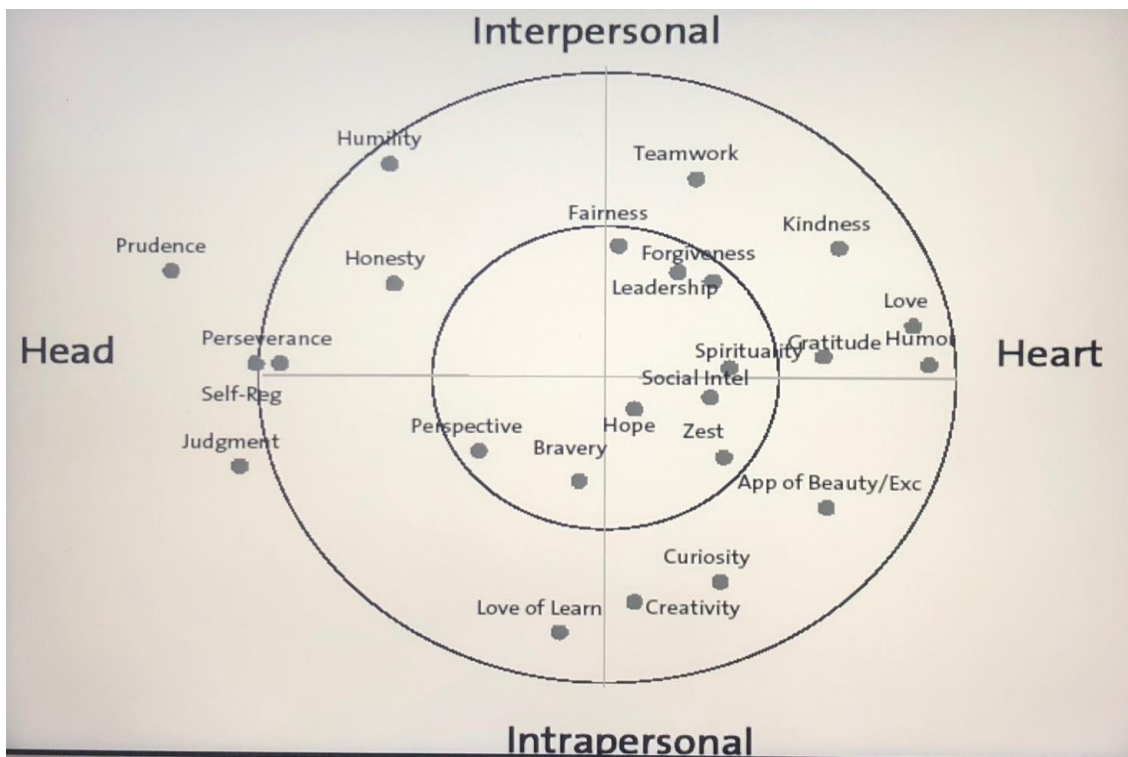
11 out of 16 participants

This strength enables one to provide wise counsel to others and having ways of looking at the world that **make sense to the self and to other people**. It facilitates a wider view and enables one to integrate viewpoints beyond one's own. Research has shown that it is one of the strengths most **connected to a life of engagement** and it can buffer against the negative effects of stress and trauma.

Charting the top 10 character strengths of each individual Biodanzero on a Holistic Map:

Image 1 represents the two-factor model or balanced graph on which Peterson mapped the character strengths over two continua, these as strengths from the heart (e.g. feeling, body, emotion, intuition) or head (e.g. Logic analysis and reasoning) on the horizontal axis and strengths that are interpersonal (with others) or intrapersonal (when alone) on the vertical axis. (Niemiec , graph44 , Character Strength interventions) The location point of character strength on the graph is predetermined and the mapping simply gives a more holistic view of the strengths. ²⁵

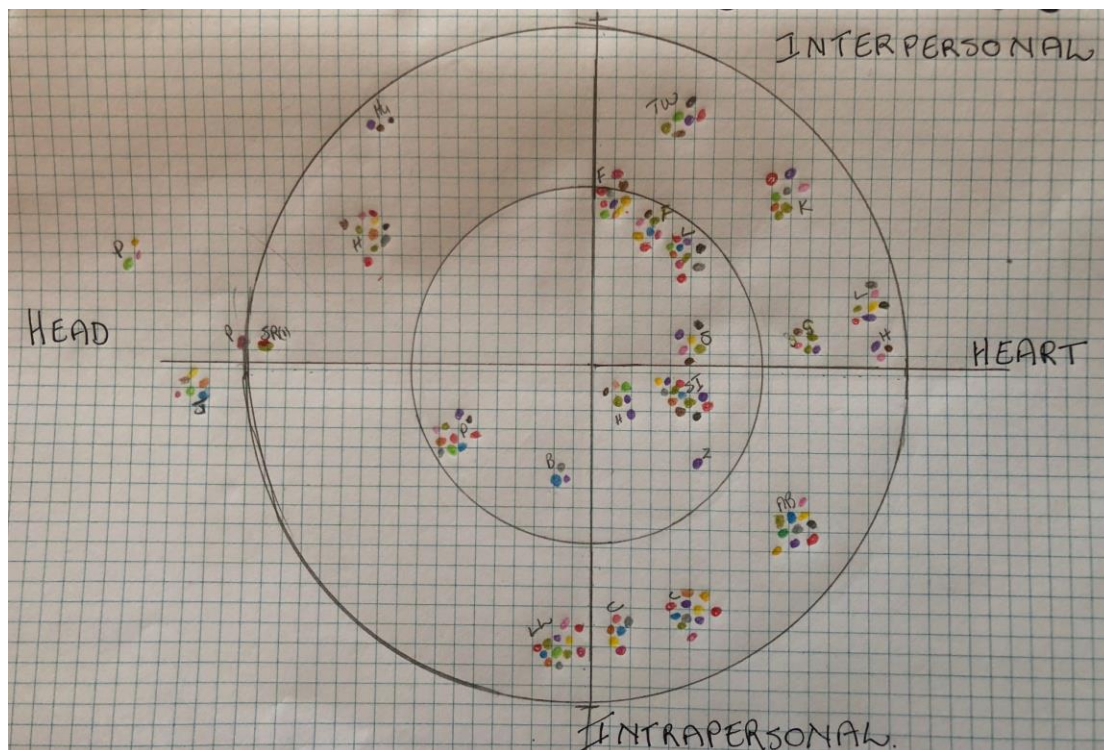
Image 1



²⁵ This can be used as an analysis of the characteristics of groups placing groups of people participating in specific pursuits such as teachers, businessmen, dancers within the context of the graph.

Image 2, the graph represents a placement of the top 10 characteristics of each of the 16 Biodanzeros who completed the survey.

Image 2



Analysis of the information in the graph:

Heart and head axis-

It is very clear at first glance that the top 10 character strengths of the participants are more heart centred. Heart centred strengths manifest as bodily feelings. The bodily feelings Niemiec describes for strengths of appreciation of beauty, gratitude and social intelligence include: a warmth in the chest, relaxing heaviness in the shoulders, tingling in the fingers and hands and a sense of opening up to others and the world, a sense of awe and a feeling of being tuned in. In conversations with Biodanzeros these are often experiences that will be associated with a moment of encounter.

It is also important to note the three clusters that can be seen in the head (mind thoughts and beliefs) section. These characters strengths are honesty, perspective and love of learning. These character strengths point to approaches to life and therefor the Biodanza experience that authentic, well thought through and an enthusiasm for life.

Interpersonal and intrapersonal

In Character Strength analysis strengths expressed with others would be interpersonal-oriented and strength expresses when alone would be intrapersonal-oriented. The graph clearly shows that the participants displayed an even distribution of primary strengths in both the interpersonal and intrapersonal halves.

A phenomenon that could talk to the integrative purpose of Biodanza – as the participant integrate the centres of the head, the heart and the pelvis and dissolve the armour referred to be Reich we are able to integrate and nourish our inherent need and ability to interact and relate to one another.

This small sample and impromptu analysis have opened a window on the primary character strengths displayed by the participants.

To give this data and interpretation validity it has to be compared with other similar actions in Biodanza groups worldwide. The next step in this dissertation however is to further interpret how the qualities displayed by the identified primary character strengths and reflected in the holistic map translates in to Biodanza.

A friend put a more doable proposal to me. He suggested that I invite new participants to complete the Australian Personal Well-being Index survey of 10 questions and ask the same participants to complete the survey regularly over a period of time.

PAULA REGO: The Dance 1988



9. A Biocentric interpretation of the results

“Everything that exists in the universe – be it elements, stars, plants or animals, including humans – is a component of a larger living system. The universe exists because life exists – not the other way around. Relationships of matter-energy transformation are degrees of integration of life.” (Rolando Toro: Arenada, Vital Unconscious & Biocentric Principle. Page 55.)

People who continue with and are invested in the Biodanza experience are solution driven. They are seeking a better personal experience and hoping for a better world. Our aim is to do this from a Biocentric perspective - a perspective that puts life first, a perspective that honours the sacred. I observe a philosophic life- affirming link between a biocentric approach and the concepts of well-being and signature strengths defined by Positive Psychology. Humans have always venerated the qualities in us as a species that celebrate the sacred within as well as how that manifests in our relationship with others. This has happened through the ages despite attempts by religion and the state to subvert and hijack the process. Rolando Toro felt there are universal human qualities that distinguish us as a species and can be harnessed to work toward a society where there is place for the biocentric individual and a harmonious community.

Chris Peterson researched and captured these qualities. As Biodanza practitioners this resource provides an opportunity to enhance the Biocentric experience of participants.

The opportunity is to frame the Biodanza experience in such a way that the framing facilitates Rolando Toro’s hope to restore a different bonding in a time of chaos. This would enable participants to enter into “a new way of living, awakening our dormant sensitivity” in each vivencia. A snapshot of the research done for this dissertation shows that biocentric values such as love, kindness, curiosity, team work, fairness, gratitude, creativity are signature character strengths for these participants. If we enable these strengths to flourish we facilitate biocentric integration.

Collating the descriptions of the six signature strengths displayed by Biodanzeros we create the following anthology of phrases that can lead to unique encounters:

1. The virtue of wisdom and knowledge invites you to be true to yourself and authentic to others
2. Love of learning enables you to add systematically to what one knows
3. The appreciation of beauty and excellence leads to feeling awe, admiration and wonder in the every day
4. Social intelligence is the ability to be tuned in to the pleasures of life
5. Curiosity can carry us beyond openness to new experiences associated with personal growth
6. Perspective helps us make sense of the world for ourselves and others and leads to a life of engagement.

The manner we create this experience in Biodanza is by setting the scene through an enunciation, choosing an appropriate music (that often has appropriate lyrics), demonstrating (hopefully entering into vivencia during the process) and then inviting participants to their personal lived moment opens possibilities to create a container of tenderness in which we meet each other with presence.

The creation of this experience is what leads to integration and growth in Biodanza. Humans transcend boundaries from birth to take the next step in their development, our natural curiosity drives us to find new ways of doing things and integrate more and more into our worlds. The result of this need for the creativity results in an integration of archaic and evolving patterns of the brain and gives rise to feelings of elevation of mood (happiness) and a poetic sense of this is just right. Humans naturally work towards a brain-synergy. (Workbook Creativity, BSA2, p)

The defining qualities of the couple of signature strengths most prominent within the group *Social Intelligence* and a *Love of Learning* is the physical feeling of being “in tune with the world” and the “desire to continue growing “ towards well-being.

10. Into the world:

Being tuned in and a desire to continue learning is part of the essence of Biodanza. Within this system it is firstly about an encounter with the wonder of life and living, and the sacred quality of granting presence through tenderness. This contrasts with many other systems where the search is firstly to access the transcendental.

Social Intelligence and a Love of Learning are both strengths in which an ability to be present in the world are integral. Biocentrically it is to be able to be in a state of “erlebenis” (the state of vivencia and living at the moment), with a broader awareness that encounters the “umwelt” (the consciousness woven by living the five lines of genetic potential and continuing to explore these within the vivencial session), which enables deflagration and an integration of these strengths.

We experience encounters and vivencias wordlessly. The heart, and not the manifestation of thoughts are centre stage. Encounter accesses ways of being or transformation in a similar way to that of poetry.

“Poetry gets to undergirding truths which is sometimes distinct from fact.” (Krista Tippett quoting Elizabeth Alexander)

This is the key to the life changing effect of the vivencia of the encounter. Each encounter similarly to each word in a poem is activated with passion and purpose when we live a life-centred biocentric life. In this way both poetry and encounter gets to “undergirding truths that go beyond the mere fact “.

In a world where there is an integral lack of tenderness, where acts of violence, abuse, and neglect are being thrown at us continuously Biodanza plays a crucial role.

In her poem “Arts Poetica #100 I Believe” Elizabeth Alexander wrote:

Poetry (here I hear myself loudest)

Is the human voice,

And are we not of interest to each other?

My proposal is that because we are bio-psychosocially of interest to each other we will keep on seeking how to live together with tenderness and an encounter of honouring presence.

Krista Tippett and Rolando Toro share a love of Rainer Maria Rilke. She refers to Rilke's thoughts on living with questions: " ... the point is to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps then, someday for in the future, you will gradually without even noticing it, live your way into the answer"

No we will not change the world, but we will change the worlds of those who seek us out.

Through tender encounters we will be lucky enough to facilitate a process by which people will come into contact with beauty, with hope, with joy and with wonder – with a sense of presence. They will be in tune, be curious to learn more, be more creative and love more on their journey.

Rolando described his vision masterfully in an interview in Chile in 2002. (Warnken, C 2009) He said: "I thought of Biodanza as the poetry of the human encounter - a different way of relating in an extremely solitary world in which people are deprived of love. And what we need most in life is tenderness."

It seems to me that his vision is continuously validated and that in a world where the negative bias of dissociation can be *front-and-centre* we should return daily to his vision and our purpose to encounter:

"There will be better times – I have no doubt because that is the destiny of Man. The destiny of Man is not the omnipotence of money, or technological omnipotence.

The destiny of Man is love ...

I have had the same purpose from the beginning of the world – to smell your skin, to contemplate the rain, to inhabit the jungle of a thousand years, to read the sky full of stars and mysteries, to take you by the hand and to dance ..."

.....END

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BIODANZA SISTEMA ROLANDO TORO WORKBOOKS (Copyright Rolando Toro Araneda)
Rolando Toro School of Biodanza – Australia; 11 Cycle 2013-2016; Kate Clement and Catherine Borgeaud, Directors

I mainly referred to the following workbooks in this dissertation, however certain sections of the workbook could touch on elements of workbooks not listed here.

1. Definition and the Theoretical Model of Biodanza
 2. The Vital Unconscious and the Biocentric Principle
 3. The Vivencia
 4. Biological Aspects of Biodanza
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12. Appendices

Appendix One – Michael Delamere Reflections; written by Michael Delamere on request.
Received: December 2018

Appendix Two- Discussion with Myrna Lewis, Founder of the Lewis Method of Deep Democracy
in September 2018

Appendix Three – Via report on Character Strengths - <https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/my-drive>

Appendix Four – Discussions recorded during the Biodanza Creativity Weekend October 2018

Appendix Five – Origin of the word encounter

Appendix Six – Poem – *Twinkle twinkle* Heleen Meyer Fourie

APPENDIX ONE - Michael Delamere - Reflections

Encounter

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About me

I am a heterosexual Anglo-Saxon male. I started Biodanza just before my 60th birthday and have now been dancing for seven years.

I am an adult survivor of physical child abuse, which left me with lifelong psychic wounds. The most obvious result is that although I have had multiple lovers, was married for 17 years and had one other live-in relationship, I have not formed a single healthy intimate relationship in my life. Not obvious to others and only clear to me after long term psychotherapy is that for most of my life I suffered from a deep fear of abandonment. There have been other consequences such as anhedonia (incapacity to feel joy) and depressive episodes, a couple of times severe.

General experience with encounter

While dancing was my greatest fear and I was highly anxious for the first dozen or so classes and remained somewhat anxious for a year or two, I had little difficulty with encounter, with one exception. I am comfortable with women, had always known how to flirt and give them attention, and enjoyed their company¹. In the early stages Biodanza did not involve great intimacy in encounter, but even as I became involved in deepening classes I relished encounter and enjoyed the deeper intimacy and contact. Having lived alone for almost all of the last 27 years, encounter filled a gap in my life.

The exception was where a perception of performance was involved. Walking in pairs always provoked anxiety as my ability to walk in step with another was impaired, I had very poor control over my feet and legs. Games provoked a similar reaction. Later, dances such as The Dance of the Masculine, Dance of Seduction were stressful - I felt I was bad at these.

1 I took a deep breath when, in my first session, I realised I had to dance with men. I relaxed soon enough.

Variety of experience

I loved the varied forms of encounter. A simple experience such as eutony with the fingertip could be ecstatic. I grew to enjoy walks. Gazes, moving from encounter to encounter, circles, hugs, caresses of the hand and hair, angel exercises, giving and receiving dance with another, exercises of undifferentiated eros, I valued them all. Nesting was enjoyable but rarely provided intensity of experience and as I experienced increased pain being on a floor the experience became ordinary.

Random encounter

When I started to do deepening exercises, about 3 years into my Biodanza experience, I ran into a severe barrier. I wanted to do intimate exercises with the youngest and prettiest females and apparently so did every other male dancer. But they were monopolised by the most experienced male dancers. I grew angry, started to dwell on the unfairness and the apparent dissonance between the ideals of Biodanza and the reality (which mirrored exactly the dynamics of the real world). My Biodanza experience was collapsing.

I made a critical decision. I invented 2 mental rules which I applied every time the enunciation said or implied "choose a partner". The rules meant that effectively I removed any element of personal choice in whom I danced with. [There are limited and infrequent exceptions, of little relevance here.] Who I 'want' to dance with is not related to whom I actually dance with. I do not disclose my strategy to the group. I see this decision as being perhaps the most important I made about Biodanza. I dance with young and old, skilled and unskilled, new to me or known forever. I end a class having danced at least once with most participants.

I have learned so much. Not least, over the next year I developed the gift of what Rolando Toro called 'aesthetic perception'. I can see the beauty in all. This has gone with me into the outside world - I find myself enjoying the way someone is walking, or notice something beautiful in an older person's face. My choice has made me a happy, generous and at least moderately skilful dance partner.² I have never seen a need to reconsider it.

Intimacy

While I welcomed encounter, my reaction to intimacy was somewhat different. My psychological impairment made intimacy, as distinct from sexual interaction in the world outside Biodanza³, more problematic in my initial learning. I loved intimacy but found overwhelming feelings left me drained. As a result I would take breaks from Biodanza to give myself space to regain emotional equilibrium. Now, a gift from Biodanza, I can accept and give intimacy with little need to recover⁴.

2 On learning of this strategy, a visiting female facilitator didactic called me "afraid". I found her reaction unsophisticated, naive.

3 I had been happy to be promiscuous, without intimacy.

4 However, see "Pygmalion" below.

The most important healing for me has been to remove the fear of abandonment. For a number of years I have not experienced the very specific and known feeling of profound desolation that could overtake me⁵. Triggers were unpredictable, known only in retrospect. The situation always involved love or friendship. Three years after starting Biodanza I was able to accept the loss of the love of my life, to transact disengagement in an adult manner, without the experience of abandonment⁶. I now maintain at least two close friendships with women, able to avoid repeating past patterns of 'falling in love' and yielding to 'neediness'.

Trust

A gift I carry in the world, part of my personality, I brought to my Biodanza encounters. I am someone whom people find easy to trust. And it is very important to me to maintain that quality as part of who I am and remain deserving of it. This is part of whom I wish to be. I brought these qualia to my encounters. My experience of encounter includes a dozen or more occasions on which my female dance partner has burst into tears⁷, and a male partner on one or two occasions. Once, at the end of class I asked the woman if she was ok. She replied: "I'm ok. It was healing. It happened because I trusted you". I recount this not to self-promote, but rather to illustrate a quality in encounter I believe to be hugely important, not just to me but for all.

Eroticism in Encounter

I came to Biodanza with very strong principles around safety and abuse. I was predisposed to these by a lifetime spent with women, listening to their stories. But these general 'feelings' were hardened by my training and experience as a psychotherapist, including significant work with adult survivors of childhood sexual assault. I do not resile from stating my approach was, and is, 'zero tolerance'. On the other hand my attitudes to sexuality were influenced in my formative years by the hippie movement, the ideals of sexual freedom, casting off the restraints of 1950's conventional morality⁸. I came to dance with strong ideals around the values of personal freedom. Finally, I valued being trusted.

As maybe imagined, Biodanza provided a crucible in which these perhaps conflicting ideas would be strongly tested! How to handle eroticism⁹? I have finally made my choices:

- the world is not safe for women, female participants bring this lived experience to dance
- as a male, my taking active steps to make an encounter 'erotic' risks destroying trust. I never take the initiative
- if a woman wishes to add the erotic to an encounter she can take the lead, for example place my hand on her breast. This happens rarely, but when it has the experience has been rich. Once a man took such an initiative.

Again, I have not disclosed my decisions to the group. My feeling is that there is a subtext in Biodanza, perhaps related to its South American roots but also found in our culture, that 'men should be proactive, take the lead in pursuing an erotic encounter'¹⁰. This influences me not at all. I have made my choices.

Ecstasy

Sometimes, encounter is ecstatic. In this vivencia, I and my partner dissolve, melt into each other so that she and I are one. There is no skin between us. The world vanishes, our single self is the only reality. For me, this experience is the peak of Biodanza.

5 The only description I have read which approaches my reality of this experience comes from J. K. Rowling in Harry Potter: The Prisoner of Azkaban. "Dementors are among the foulest creatures that walk this earth. They infest the darkest, filthiest places, they glory in decay and despair, they drain peace, hope, and happiness out of the air around them... Get too near a Dementor and every good feeling, every happy memory will be sucked out of you. If it can, the Dementor will feed on you long enough to reduce you to something like itself... soulless and evil. You will be left with nothing but the worst experiences of your life."

6 I did experience deep grief and depression but perhaps view these as natural, part of the normal experience of being human.

7 I am used to 'holding' a situation like this, leaving the other to their experience. I do not hug until I see the other has left their personal world and I see (sometimes intuitively) a clear request.

8 As, clearly, was Rolando Toro Araneda.

9 For female readers, I must be clear. In general terms, for males an 'erotic' situation is one which is conducive to penile erection. Period. My impression is that females have a wider, more imaginative approach.

10 There are some exercises in which males taking the initiative in encounter is a specific instruction, although sexual initiative is not mentioned except as seduction. A lesbian participant once said to me wistfully "I would like to have been able to dance as a man". She had clearly felt excluded by the enunciation.

It is not common, but not rare either. I know that a facilitator skilled in creating deepening sessions makes ecstasy more likely. I cannot predict a partner who will create ecstasy. However, once it happens, it will happen more with that person, nearly to the point of being expected, but without ever losing its impact. Then, ecstasy is less dependent on the facilitator. Usually the person will reveal themselves as a partner in ecstasy quite quickly, sometimes in the first session together. The opportunity to dance with an ecstatic partner will drive me to Biodanza through external difficulties¹¹. It is a peak life experience.

The ecstatic partner is usually a somewhat experienced dancer, Biodanza or other discipline. In my experience, ecstasy is created when both partners have the ability to dance slowly, sometimes to the point of almost imperceptible movement. This is not known to new dancers. Immobility, nesting, do not create ecstasy although the vivencia may move to a point of immobility and to the floor. The vivencia almost always starts in a standing position, with fluid movement. Mutuality is key - I cannot read the mind of a partner but I feel that she also has chosen to yield all control to the experience.

I never ask a partner 'how was the experience for you?' My only knowledge is what I experience or observe. Post-session tenderness, warmth, a joyful smile, a willingness or eagerness to dance again, that is all I have to go on. And all I need.

It is important to distinguish ecstasy and eroticism. In my experience, eroticism is a barrier, a distraction from ecstasy. If I have erotic objectives I am unable to surrender, I'm focused on the hunt for pleasure. However, I suspect that erotic potential is a helpful factor at a subconscious level. Most of my ecstatic experiences have been with younger women (one partner for a period was absurdly young). But not all¹². I cannot confidently find elements of fetish¹³ in my conscious recollection of ecstatic experience. I do not remember ecstasy with a man and feel it would be unlikely as I could not easily surrender.

11 The reverse is true also, Biodanza becomes less interesting when no such partner is available and my life barriers to participation become more influential. Also, groups without an ecstatic partner which do not have new people starting or visiting can become less of a pull.

12 To be fair to myself, almost everyone I meet in dance is younger!

13 Rolando Toro defined fetish as the physical characteristics in another which promote sexual attraction to that person.

Encounter - the Shadow Side

Filling the conscious mind with ideal conceptions is a characteristic of Western theosophy, but not the confrontation with the shadow and the world of darkness. One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious. Carl Jung.

Pygmalion

In the ancient Greek myth, the Cypriot sculptor Pygmalion carved an ivory statue of a woman. Its beauty was so great he fell in love with it. He asked the goddess of love, Aphrodite, if she could grant him a wife so beautiful. Taking pity on him, she brought the statue to life. Pygmalion and his wife Galatea lived happily, bringing up a daughter.

Biodanza has a primary myth, the Minotaur. After a lifetime of effort, I have slain the Minotaur. My Biodanza myth is Pygmalion. The modern version, both the play by George Bernard Shaw and the movie "My Fair Lady" are darker than the original, speaking more to unrequited love between an older man and a younger woman. It is a myth of the unattainable and speaks with some truth about how such relationships often play out in real life.

I live alone. Life circumstances are such that this situation is likely to continue for the rest of my life. So the occasional experiences of erotic and ecstatic encounter, while eagerly sought, leave me in a state of intense, turbulent and disorienting struggle. I lose perspective. The dissonance between reality and the sweetness of encounter is hard to bear. It is easier for me to live a life of accepting unwanted reality, rather than having it overturned by a burst of hope. My partner in encounter goes home to husband, boyfriend or girlfriend and I wake up alone, to a life without love. To be someone who is trusted becomes a curse.

I spoke of this with a friend who dances 5 Rythms. She looked at me and said "but when the dance session is over, it's over. We have to just walk away". I replied: "so I've had the experience of a woman's body melting into mine like warm chocolate, and I'm supposed to forget it?"

Coping with this takes enormous strength. So far I have been able to. Whether or not there is a lesson or peace at the end of the struggle only time will tell.

Vivencia of Rape

Only once has encounter lead to a traumatic vivencia. I gently terminated the encounter after two or three minutes with an overwhelming feeling of having been raped. I must be clear. Although my partner was being proactive in seeking eroticism, she was not the cause of my experience. Rather, the encounter combined with a negative experience in the group prior to the exercise triggered an overwhelming traumatic response from my unconscious. It was a textbook re-traumatisation event, reliving the powerlessness of childhood. The experience was truly dreadful.

In retrospect, having lived the life of a privileged white male, the encounter was a strong learning event that the majority of men will not go through. Powerful defence mechanisms had to be stripped away for it to occur. I value it for that.

A Plea

Dancing was my greatest fear. I came to Biodanza at the invitation of someone I was in love with. I remained, pushing through high anxiety, even though my love interest never returned. What drove me to persist with what was an enormously difficult endeavour? I believe I was driven by two imperatives of my unconscious. Firstly, a hunger for encounter, for contact. And secondly, a need to heal the wounds of childhood; inability to love and trust.

Survivors of childhood abuse often have some of these traits: lack of trust, difficulty with intimacy, hypervigilance (a constant scanning of the environment for threat), anxiety about touch and a need to control their immediate environment¹⁴. These traits run directly counter to the ethos of Biodanza. I feel that my hypothesis about myself could have wider relevance. My perception is that other wounded are drawn to Biodanza, perhaps also by an unconscious drive to healing.

14 For example: strict rules and anxiety around food may be an example of the manifestation of a need to control one's environment.

What could go wrong? Encounter could.

Being trusted, I listened to female Biodanzeros recount their distress at incidents of sexual assault within Biodanza. And how they found nowhere to take their experience. I listened to more than one male share their distress at being excluded by women in the group, blind to the reasons why and without anywhere to go for guidance. A seemingly foolish blindness, but common amongst males in the real world¹⁵.

My vivencia of rape is a dramatic illustration of traumatic vivencia and an example of what can go badly wrong. However I am male, it was dramatic because strong defences were broken. For women, because sexual harassment is part of life, denial or minimisation of the seriousness of the experience is a common coping mechanism, explaining events away. This is how women living in abusive situations continue. In Biodanza I've seen both minimisation and dancers quietly leaving, never to return.¹⁶

I believe that Biodanza needs to be clear that sexual assault is not tolerated. And I believe that it needs to be made clear to women that they are encouraged to share negative experiences to the group and will be supported when they do so. The fear of confronting a group, being different, naming a respected or influential male, perhaps provoking exclusion, is very powerful. It has to become a group norm that these matters are to be spoken about. I realise it is hard to find men to be members of a group. And I can believe that the presence of men increases the value of the group for a significant number of women. But this consideration can not be relevant if creating a safe, healing space is the primary objective.

Society is seeing a new revolution, a violent overthrow of power, in #MeToo. It is driven by only two simple factors: women speak out, men fear their actions being made public. Without change, Biodanza risks becoming a dinosaur from last century.

Biodanza is a way of healing, it has helped heal me and others. By adding a perspective which includes the lived experience of women and survivors, it has the potential to heal many more.

-- *** --

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December 2018

This essay was written for a friend writing a monograph on encounter in Biodanza. She asked me to recount my experience.

15 An obvious question is "what did I do about it?". The answer is complex and not relevant here.

16 The Biodanza answer to these issues is non-verbal feedback. My observations lead me to believe it is ineffective in addressing the violation of sexual boundaries. Women can feel constrained in using it just as they are reluctant to speak. Its power is greatly reduced by being private to the two people involved.

Interview on the marriage of a Newtonian and Quantum approach in Psycho-analytics:

Notes will show Myrna Lewis's perception – try to marry Newtonian and Einsteinian from the basis of psycho-analytics and TA – transformational role theory – notes Myrna will send – usually taught experientially.

Traditional perspective of community: Describe the world according to the 3 worlds within community – eigen welt – personal world ; mitt welt – community world and the umwelt which is society – Old way to structure the world , sociologically based. Can see Biodanza in terms of the different worlds – community is important to Biodanza - does it slot in . Take from this traditional world view and does it fit in

Myrna's view - BD is a very unusual world – it is not about people knowing each other it is because they do not know each other that provides safety. You are not speaking but you are experiencing something in the safety of what Jung would describe as the crucible – Rolando influenced by Reich who was heavily influenced by Jung. (Time that he lived)

What Jung described is to create a crucible – a sacred space – sacred in a numinous way – a holding space that is safe and would therefore allow from a Jungian perspective the alchemical processes required for psycho-analysis . And he saw analysis mainly as a facilitative process, even though he did use interpretation and he worked within the transcendental. I think that Rolando worked with the safe space Jung described as opposed to the community work – a lot of psychologists would say the community is important.

Not a community created through bonding and create an extended family.- as a result of disaster (Some-one wrote on that) Myrna feels that the more you get to know people in Biodanza the worse it gets – in a way you cannot be free you are too aware of them in your space and in that awareness the vivencia is limited and more it influences the vivencia - to ML the Beauty of the vivencia comes in the safe space where I can be with the other in my projection of the other and what I need to project on the other and to resolve stuff and not have any feedback in relation to that and not have any personal feedback

That is when Myrna suggested that I should move out of the paradigm of a more Newtonian view and take Mindell's quantum view – where everything is happening all in one. The– eigen welt and um welt – are not separated they are happening in the moment all at once and a lot more happening. IN a way if you look at the vivencia from that perspective – the more the vivencia works the less I know – I want to go there do my thing and leave –

Community – creating a structure – a safe space – but not because I know you – Deep Democracy not looking at the individual story look at the individual role

you talk more because of the role, not because you know the person. The role will spread not the individual – so people will feel closer more quickly because you are not looking at the individual story, you are looking at the role.

Do qualitative interview - can do a factor analysis – the factors and the clusters of the different roles that emerge – knowing that a role is an emotion, an idea, a physical symptom, a relationship and an archetype - and in a way if you look at Alan, Myrna – Cluster the Roles and will get something to work with.

If look at it from a Newtonian perspective - more form and function – who it is what they do

Then look at it in the juxtaposition of the cluster of roles in relationship – know that a role is look at the qualities of the different roles –

The relationships that do develop are deep – still in the biodanza or vivencial frame, but is not the kind of relationship you would develop in a group therapy environment - where I get to know you because I know your story. The story in BD becomes accidental – you may never know the story, because it is purely about human to human contact – ML – it is better not to know the story because then it takes away from the texture of the role - the roles here are more important than the individual stories.

The time that Rolando lived in the time that the talking therapies were the answer – Reich was one of the first people to move out of the talking therapies into the body. ML can imagine that what RT was finding is that in the areas that he was working – psychosis – the talking therapies did not help very much, but something like music worked. Can imagine that he would have stopped the talking therapies - His reaction to the Freudian and Jungian approach was to stop the talking therapies . Went looking for what besides talking do we share as human beings. When we talk the cognitive gets in the way – what do we share that takes us deeper, that does not say that talking therapies were bad or not appropriate . ML feels and the people whom he initially trained were already sophisticated psychologically and they would have naturally had some form of outlet . ML – BIODANZA OPENS AN INCREDIBLE AMOUNT AND TO HAVE THE STRONG VIEW THAT BD IS IT ON ITS OWN I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN WHAT HE WOULD HAVE WANTED.

MYRNA hit a depression – a deep depression – people say the way through is to dance – the vivencia has a whole lot more from an Einsteinian view and the complexity of the different roles and what is happening in the moment – if you collapse the worlds into one – it is what quantum work is doing it is saying it is all in the oneness in the here and now – everything is in this moment – you can see the tremendous complexity that is happening in the moment – it is hard you cannot unpack it all it is impossible there is too much happening, but it is in that wealth that juice that amazing sense of what is happening – that everything is happening at the same time on a conscious and unconscious level everything is possible and that is why the vivencia works . It is not just a combination of clever choreography and gorgeous music no – it is everything that is happening in that space – that all the different roles that are floating around – which are not being labeled which is important – which is what the psychology will do and then will

cognite is – do not talk about it because then it becomes conscious – and once it becomes conscious you lose the essence of what could happen. ML_ IT IS NOT HAPPENING IN THE BRAIN , BUT IT IS HAPPENING IN THE PROCESS AND SOO MUCH IS HAPPENING IN THAT MOMENT – it is so rich that you cannot unpack everything – you cannot analyse what causes what – the Newtonian view of knowing is what blinds us . We have to recognise in this complex situation that there is no way of know what causes what – we do not know we can only sit and watch with as much possibility of presence to pick up some of the things that are there, but we do not know what causes what . I would say – to write the poetry of the encounter – is to start there – that from an Einsteinian view have no idea.

Thesis –

Rolando said that the grace lies in the poetry of the encounter– if we unpack grace it is a quantum concept - refer to above.

APPENDIX FOUR - DISCUSSIONS RECORDED DURING THE CREATIVITY WEEKEND – October 2018

M – I think encounters are like magnets – you come together and the energy gets stronger and stronger until you become one – magnetism You come together as magnets;

Li – there is something in the mystery and the discovery or the light in the eye, or just a little movement on the cheek or the hair - there is just something that draws you in to explore a little further - the mystery mirror.

H Encounters starts when you take some-one's hand in the circle – encounters are everything in Biodanza – we have physical encountering exercises , but encounters are much more – cannot do yoga without being able to sit , or meditation without focusing attention , cannot do Biodanza without encounters

What we call encounters is just the peak experience when two people coming together, but everything else we do in Bd is preparing us for that- everytime you do something with some-one else – it does not have to be physical - an encounter does not need touch .

Sometimes we do not touch – but the atoms touch.

You cannot help but be altered through the experience , even if it is that first hand hold in the circle – you are making an offer and some-one accepts it. That is an encounter – offering and accepting

Ben – in your Biodanza experience what did you like best
Connection – beautiful, authentic true connection sincere caring – connection
How do you make this connection ? I like best the connection by heart – heart electromagnetic encounter

Monica – so encounters are the atoms meeting that are in between all of us – we are sharing atoms – you do not have to touch – can even have the eyes closed and have the music create the bridge – music vibrating the molecules – you have the mix between the music vibrating and your heart vibrating.

M. Whenever in life we have these encounters – the difference in Biodanza is you quite consciously open yourself out to it – in real life you are on a train and quickly your eyes meet and most people do not want to be intimate with a stranger.

H. I think that my experience in Biodanza translates into my every day life

L. I agree – it takes away the fear and often that person has a smile and a little nod – that is an encounter and what I love about that richness is that because even if you meet the same person all the time – like my beautiful Alan, you always meet them anew. It is always different – even if it is the same person it is always different – it is always new because you are in a different place, the environment is different, everything is new – it is the most natural way to communicate. I picture the encounter of a mother's breast and eyes when she sees her newborn – what is more magical than that – the recognition. That is yet another element – is the sensitivity to that and .. it is beautiful it is just beautiful.

H. Would you say there is a language of “encounters”? That it is a language that we perhaps are not learning anymore.

M. Yes perhaps – what is an encounter and what is not – like in the train – when is it not an encounter? When you meet the person – did you already have an encounter .. you look away, but still something reverberates – that embarrassment or whatever. Is an encounter only the sweet meeting of the heart – what about all the other meetings – are they encounters as well?

H. Can we talk about positive encounters?

L. Which Biodanza offers – it offers that opportunity and is one of the conditions – in a space that is safe and contained. It affords us the opportunity to have that experience.

H. Do you need tenderness to have an encounter – if I look at you on a train with tenderness – whether you look back or not – it must have been an encounter – somewhere it will resonate with you.

L. Is an encounter any experience that have altered you..

H. – Good point – because one of the definitions of poetry is that it is active words with passion. If you in your relationship – if you make the difference in yourself – if you are altered.

M Or it says poetry of the encounter because the encounters in Biodanza are so beautiful that they become poetic. Does it mean that all the other encounters are not encounters.

H However one of us has said that all the other encounters are also encounters as poetry are not always necessary beautiful .

L. Poetry is real – poetry is life. I Biodanza it is life exemplified in movement and words and sometimes sounds not always words. The common thing is life and movement – every aspect of life.

M. What would you say to an encounter that is fairly flat – is that not an encounter any more?

L. To me it is an encounter.

M. It is not a life enhancing encounter but it is still an encounter.

L That suggests that encounters might be prearranged – orchestrated – I think the moment your senses perceive some-one or something around you there is already something shifting. What about when you have a sense that some-one is nearby? You have not seen them with your eyes yet, but your system has recognised that they are there. That is an encounter – you are being moved in some way.

H So the question is if you start living Biocentrically and you are moved by some-one in some way can your first reaction be tenderness?

L That comes after a lot of exposure to Biodanza – not in the first few weeks.

H. How do you react in the first few weeks?

L. I think there is tension, there is apprehension there is not sure, what do I do , I do not know if I want to look – self consciousness – do I feel safe in those first sessions .

M The demonstrative nature of Biodanza is questioned – what is all this kissing – do they know everybody – or do they just kiss every-one. I prefer to be only intimate with some-one I know and have a special connection with – is often the attitude – I am not going to kiss everybody.

L It is safe to have encounters at a distance – but Biodanza brings you closer – physically and it brings a bond – and we know how powerful bonds can be – again you are forever altered. The bond may shift and move but you are never the same .

M Because sometimes when you do not see people for a while it can feel a little bit estranged – but then you remember – I really do have that sometimes – I say I remember exactly what went on if I had a special experience with them.

L And I am wondering if that is about the fact that our nervous system has a memory – not cognitive – our whole system has a memory of its own – these are my words – and if it can be repulsed from something that it finds scary or will

not serve your health interests equally it is moving closer to the things that feel good – your nervous system remembers that and wants more of that. That is why when that experience has been pleasurable and you meet that person again the chances are likely that it might happen again.

H. BD has been in Australia for 7 years – so we must be changing something in the field – that is how I understood what Rolando said – if we can meet existentially we can keep on meeting existentially – because that is what an encounter is.

L – No doubt we are changing the field and there is something about an encounter that is not only of a physical nature – there are sensation or feelings where our senses are awake that happen individually.

ST Interrupt – I do like encounters they are part of my trade – sipping the red wine – people are so generous when drinking the red wine.

H Would like to revisit – Alan arrives – how do you see an encounter : 14.29

Allen joins the group:

How do you meet people in BD

Al: If I meet people and I do not have any thoughts about me or any thoughts about them then an encounter happens, but I am not in a position to call it that because at that moment I have no thoughts about me or them and then it get bewildering and then I do not know what I am looking at and then something else happens a softness happens and a falling into something happens which I cannot explain either and then I go into a place of just not know – something is happening, but I do not know what it is. And I now longer know who is in front of me –

H: If you stay there long enough does it then unfold into a different knowing?

Al: Different things happen at different times – sometimes tears will come energy will rise, love will flow – all sorts of emotions will happen – but most typically words are not attached to it because the mind is staying still switched off. At times it falls into there is nobody there – like the other person is not there (they are but they are not) and I am not there (I am but I am not) – the mind cannot cope with that other than to stay with the beauty of whatever is happening – the fullness in life.

H. That is the profound – in Biodanza there is constant flux between the “existential” encounter and then there is the encounter of identity “when you step into the circle and you give someone your hand” this is an encounter.

H – Would you say there is a poetry that comes into your Biodanza experience around going for a walk ? Do you experience it as an encounter?

Al: I would not use that word but any way?

H : Which word would you use

Al: I would use the word connection. I would feel a connection I would feel a warmth and again if there is no thoughts about me and no thoughts about them and I just stay in a grounded space – feels like a connection a shared enjoyment of movement and energy.

Claudio joins:

H. What happens when you meet another?

C. The first thing that comes to me is Biodanza and as a facilitator. I do not know there is kind of an unveiling – sometime I have my clothes and so, but when I deeply encounter some-one it is a process that goes in steps – like the eyes and the hands . And it is almost like I am taking off clothes – out of the vestments that I usually use for work and for everything else and then a vulnerability comes. That is the first thing that comes for me is really becoming vulnerable. It is realising that – like when I arrived over here and I watched that encounter with Kate and Carolien I could barely talk – my whole emotional self is over there. There is a part of me that goes – no get back you cannot act like that – but it is beyond what I can control when there is truly an encounter with a person.

An encounter I had today. At the beginning of the class when I just took your hand – that was my way to say hallo. Kate came and gave her a kiss etc. I did not look at you – I took your hand we started walking – and this is what we do – we just walk together. We have done it for the past seven years. That is our hallo – our encounter – it is a re-cognition of a person.

When I look at a person and I see Allan I see myself what I want to be when I am older – the qualities in you , there are things in you there are qualities that exzude out of you that I want to be when I am your age. It is an entire projection – so I see myself in you from what you present to me . The whole story that I have with you – you coming to BD , me going to your house and us having the conversation that put me in a place where I could say – yes I am going to move into a different life . So every person to me is a story. So it is a repetition of what it is that I want out of myself and it is through people that I get there . If I just stay with myself thinking about things and writing and even dancing by myself I do not get the same growth that I get when I encounter – when I am with some-one else.

An every person is different – Heleen is different, you are different – every person for me reflects a different part of my personality . The bottomline for me of an encounter is the possibility to re-cognize – to cognify – re-cognize myself through the other through the qualities of the other. I see you – I see you I see things you are 100% Monica – I probably see anything between 30 and 80 percent of you and I filter that with my own lens and that is how life starts to make more sense because I see you portraying things that I would not portray

myself, but that I recognise – they are actually inside me. It makes sense to me because they are inside me – otherwise they would not make sense to me
H. So do you take that into the world?

Of course yes – and when I go to the next person I have a better sense of my identity . It enriches who I am and it reinforces my identity. Every time I meet you I realise yes there is a possibility to be with a person without having to use my mind- without having to use my brain – I can just be entirely in my body.

To me you have always been a very earthy person – a very pragmatic mother – you always have service with rounding which I do not always have – so when I am with you I feel – yes there is a world over here that is concrete and I am not so much in my head anymore I come down.

So this interaction with you brings me down into my body and then I carry it out to the next person I meet .

L: I want to continue, because I want to add to Claudios comment regarding Kate this afternoon and what is – my projection and assessment – what I felt was that every single human in that space was touched – so they had an encounter of sorts from the experience of observing that experience. So it does not always have to be the physical touch, something beyond the physical was present which was very moving – for me it moved me to tears – in that sense it moved me.

And I am wondering whether this is where Rolando’s concept that encounters can change us as a group comes in. My human brain figures that out because it there on the floor – I could not measure that kind of impact (I could if I had the right kind of instrumentation) – and that is where new information gets transmitted beyond where we are physically into other realms into the space.

H Into the space in between and then it reaches whatever it needs to reach

L And we know if we look at the best of the world’s design principles the one thing they need is white space – nothing can – no light can be truly seen without space around it – when you have space around it in design you can see the thing that you need to see.

H That is why he talks about the poetry of the encounter, because poetry is also about space – it is not a long continuous conversation as we have now – it is a conversation that is punctuated that has rhythm that has pauses – and there for the encounter is punctuated it has space it has rhythm it has pauses

L And the one other thing is that you are forever altered by that experience – once you have had that experience you are not the same person that you were one and a half seconds ago you have received new information and that information has altered you in ways that you have not intellectualised, but it has altered you.

C If you are present to it – if your senses are open enough – the presence the line of the attention and the senses as well. Sometime people are desensitised – their senses are so blocked that the person only hears what they can hear due to the conditioning that they have in their lives.

I agree with you (Linda) – it touches, but when you talk about witnessing an encounter I would like to bring that it does affect the people around, but the encounter itself between the two people that is the most important part. So what Caroline and Kate lived over their it is vastly more powerful and effective to them than it is for any one of us who observed it.

Alan and Linda .. hmmm I do not know – Alan I would put an edge on that .. Linda I do not know.

Al – My connection to what was going on is also personal and so I was also totally moved by that and so was Joyanne. We were both in tears because we knew what that was representing and it got us in touch with our grief and with Carolien going – I felt equally connected – who knows, but our grief was intense very much so. It felt very vibrant, it felt almost as if I was there as well – it did not feel separate. I also know that there is a connection.

H – I would support Allan – even though I was not in the vivencia – I have been creating connective bonds to keep for a while

Al I only found out at lunchtime that I was going and was talking to her about her side of the story , but was not mentally and emotionally connected to it . I was saying to Joyanne that we simply gravitated towards each other – we had to be with each other .

Yes so we will all experience our effects and it will happen on many different levels, but even then we would all be touched.

The odd thing is even if I did not know – and sometimes I get that from when a dance is being demonstrated, sometimes that is so big that I come to tears. I pay attention and (the vivencia) in the demonstration is so raw and lived that suddenly there is a growing , an emotion, a connection – that is all word story – I think it is hard to know where the connections is if one is open. Like today it started to go beyond and beyond – into the unknown.

Refers back to his encounter with Linda

Linda comes in – not known and yet familiar

Al – it sometimes hard when the mind comes in and it says – what is happening – I do not know what is happening. It is hard to pinpoint. It is almost like – I said before it is as if the person disappears – but it is almost as if the separation disappears like I am not there either and it is a different place again.

I like the suggestion that it is on a personal level as well (an identity level) so much happens in passing – sometimes on the circle – even at the very beginning

– you know you are settling in and every-one is just holding hands and then I look at peoples faces and sometimes even then it just drops into another place and then it is no longer personal – so it quickly goes down to that place.

H The purpose of encounter – to honour I am here as me, but I am here as molecules, I am here as wave, I am here as human, I am here as organism, I am here as speck of dust....

Al I would like to add another I am here – I am here not knowing, because in that state I do not know who I am, I walk past my reflection in those doors before and I say who is that – here I actually do not know who I am . The veils have to drop first , initially there is that constriction and when that begins to settle and settle I do not have a sense of who I am, but I have a reflection in everyone’s eyes and connection and I feel wow I am so loved – I feel love, but I do not know anything else outside of that in that moment. I do not have an identity anymore until I see myself in the mirror and I say who is that. It is bizarre, but it has come out of the identity place.

That is when you said the identity place – I have some questions about that – I come because I loose my identity , but it takes letting go to do it, and I know every-time there is an anxiety about it - I can feel the veils barricade it – but I know if I just let it be let it and trust letting it be – because of all the support and the love I feel here allows it just to disassemble quickly.

L SO this is of interest to me now – and that is who are you when you do not know who you are?

Al. You can only know yourself through the reflection of others . You need to be careful who is reflecting because it is not being worked out before you are there as a presence and it is when the presence that you are with is reflecting back love so there is love and then it changes it changes.

M You do not know yourself when you are on your own?

Al when you are in a state of presence you do not – you have no need – you are just presence you are just doing what you are doing – there is not a lot of who am I now , am I good at that or am I good at this – you are just presence you are creativity – you are just presence being creative you are flow. The ego can get rattled by that because it wants to know , it want to have substance so it creates a problem.

H – Do you have to be anybody – is there a need for a who are you – because I do not think there is..

Al – I agree with you that is the most loveliest state because there is no separation and I think the encounters can lead to that. Where if you look carefully – you may not say those words, but in the encounter there is this beauty, but in that moment you most probably do not realise because there is no identity – you are just open.

Cl I feel different – The identity is a framework that I operate from. This mind of mine and this constitution that I have I truly believe that I am incapable of comprehending the whole complexity of the world – I can't – so in order to be able to interact with the world that surround me I need to filter the things that are coming towards me – so I choose to look at you instead of choosing to look at Heleen. That is a choice. What makes this choice? What makes this choice is something that I call identity. That for me is identity – that identity is how I make sense of the world around me and the time that I perceive that I have in the world still to live – another 50 another 80 years , another 20 years I do not know. But how am I going to choose to be this time – to be here in Gouldburn today or to be at home playing on the computer or to be in a party somewhere else. My identity is structure through choosing.

Meditation is one of the things that allow me to sit behind to look at the identity without being rigid – without being – that is who I am. No it is not who I am , tomorrow it is going to be different and 5 minutes later it is going to be different,

When I have an encounter with a person – that is when my identity grows. That's when I have the widest possible perception of my identity – even beyond what I have in meditation because then I am with another logos – then I am with another person who has the same multitude of possible perceptions that I have as well and through that person then I meld. As I meld in group of Biodanza when we are going deep down into the curve and then my identity gets melded with everything and when I come out of that, that frame twisted a little bit – it is a little different – enriched and I go aahhh.

Of course when I am working and I am deep into work two o'clock on the afternoon on Wednesday – my mind is so constricted to this little box and I am worried about the deadline that I am not meeting because I have 3 meetings and I only have time for one – and then all that identity turns into this little thing .

That is why I need meditation and I need Biodanza in order not to allow me just to remain this little IT person constricted that only has that expression in itself – so encounters for me they are the ones that really open the world you know.

Al I think we are talking about the same thing, we are just using slightly different language . When you describe the encounter – when you describe the encounter – when the encounter totally merges you describe the encounter and yes you go back to identity – I go back to identity in doing what I do as well – so there is that side.

I did notice something beautiful today – when you demonstrated the hips, allowing energy – to allow the energy to just flow through you – how would you describe that moment for you – where you in identity or where you in “ the flow” – where would you place that?

Cl That is a good question – I was in vivencia – I was entirely in vivencia – I think a vivencia is another state as well – it is another state – I feel that I am very much inside myself – I am this thing that I call me.

H Are you in identity- or the thing beyond identity – the encounter of the self within the self – where is the biggest space – inside ourselves.

L – For me it is the nature of biology – it is what Maturana talked about in Outopiosis – where the life in the cell cannot even be measured in time , but the cell is also making decision (for want of a better word) all the time. So they decide who they are going to connect with and who they are not if they are going to allow information through or not – that is where we get a hint from – a hint of what it is to have an encounter – it is just talking to our cells because they know how to do that – they have known that for centuries and that information is passed and how is that information from ancestors stored into a cell? There is an intelligence beyond what even our simple brain can fathom, but it is a knowing..

And this is what happens Alan – when we had that encounter – there was a knowing and yet there was not a familiarity and yet there was a familiarity – there is a knowing the same as our cells – there is a knowing about what to let in and about what not to let in when – a timing – it is all there . We just let our heads get in the way.

NUMINOUS

Al – it was for me – if I was to put words on Claudio’s experience – in my world I would say that is outside of identity – it is outside of self – I would even equate it to meditation or not – because in meditation you are just sitting there in your identity anyway – I would put it nowhere in between nothing – it is an experience – It is something that happened that you were not in control of – you did not intend it to happen – you did not set out do it as a goal – you were totally in your being and somehow the energy moved it just happened and the look on your face was just gorgeous – “Oh what just happened” and to me that is an encounter – I would say, because it is not controlled in a way .

It is something in the field – whether the field is internal or one on one in the group – it is something a bit like you described creativity this morning – it is new , there is a newness that is not expected. Like our encounter Linda – it is newness that happened – it was not preconceived, I did not think about it or plan it.

So I just put that into a category outside of my normal thinking mind. I find them blessings when they happen – it does not matter how big or small – sometimes they are really big – sometimes they are small - they are a blessing – a release of a different intelligence and to touch into it and present to it is really uplifting. It in itself gives pleasure and joy .

H. It is a different intelligence – Heleen and musical body – creating the music with your body- and I got to a point where all these parts of me were singing in rhondo with the music – and I directed and directed and then they had a life of their own – I became a passenger – oh I do not have to think this to create it anymore – and that is an encounter of the different parts of the self.

APPENDIX FIVE - ORIGIN OF THE WORD ENCOUNTER

Origin of The Word Encounter

Words and pauses – the rhythm of language can be a vivencial force. It can help strengthen the concept of the cohesion of the species and the encounter, or it can erode it.

The history of the word *encounter* reflects this. As the verb the word encounter dates from 1300 AC. It is described in English language dictionaries as a, "meeting of adversaries, confrontation," from Old French *encontre* "meeting; fight; opportunity," or an unexpected meeting with some-one significant.

The English use and meaning of the word *encounter* has a more adversarial quality than the original use in Spanish, Portuguese and Latin. In these languages there are more emphasis on the feeling of *the encounter* and it could be directly translated as "*to come across*".

These definitions of *encounter* as used in the everyday reflects elements of what is meant by *an encounter* in Biodanza: it is an opportunity, that happens by chance, a meeting that will evoke a feeling and is the result of some action taken. Rolando used to say: "Act, act and act again and then think". To me *an encounter* is firstly a conscious act of engagement using music and movement as the vehicle. Positive Psychology aims to enable engagements that work towards well being using words, visualisation, journaling, meditation.

APPENDIX SIX - POEM

Twinkle Twinkle little star how we wonder what we are....

The wonder of the simplicity
Embedded in an intrinsic beyond imagination
That never ceases to amaze

A lacework pattern
Simple and regular to the eye
Impossible to recreate without the creator

To fuel it - we have to go back to basics
And break it all down in CO₂ and H₂O again

Only then can the infinite cell absorb and recreate
The spark of life once again ignited through ATP

The spark of life captured in a magic box
A code embedded in nine golden chains

Directing
Natural
Activity

Deoxyribonucleic Acid
A molecule
A maker
A replicator
A zipper

It is all in the sequence

The best humans can do is xxoxoo

But it is not about 2s

Inside the magic box, in the golden chain

Sleeps the eternal 3

3 little pigs, 3 wishes, 3 bowls of porridge

3 nitrogenous bases – codons

come together in amino-acids

common to all that lives off light

in an L - configuration

Levorotary

does it stand for life?

Oparin and Aldine saw the light

Those that drift will unite

10 L-amino-acids in all

5 nitrogenous bases were called

2 sugars claimed their place

you cannot leave without us said

fatty-acid, alcohol and amino-alcohol

Together they set forth to create life

With four building blocks

Proteins; nucleic acids; polysaccharides and lipids

These superstars grew into

Supra-molecular complexes, organelles

and finally cells

we all follow a

pre-determined biochemical plan
forged in the stars

our cells carry the innate knowledge
to nourish and create
to know what to make when
what is needed?
an intuitive cognition – self-organisation
a living poetry that
creates and recreates
a self-poetry
aptly called – autopoiesis

The twinkling star falls from the sky
The process to evolve - to become – starts
leaving unique footprints in our memory ...
(Heleen Meyer Fourie)